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ABSTRACT

This document contains 43 papers presented at a conference on research in teaching adults at the University of Exeter, England, in 1998. Among the papers are the following: "Reconstructing Academic Practice: Research and Teaching in a University School of Adult Education" (David Boud); "Re-searching Adult Education Practice: Paradoxes and Possibilities" (Allie Clemans); "Learning in Virtual Space: Potential and Pitfalls in Electronic Communication" (Mike Davis, Kate Denning); "Becoming Expert: Using Ethnographies of Everyday Learning To Inform the Education of Adults" (Mary Hamilton); "Making Links between Teaching and Research: An Example from an Inquiry into Networked Learning" (Michael Hammond); "The Trinity Ring of Knowledge: Teaching, Learning, and Research" (William Hampton and Danny Mashengele, with Fang Xiao, Conchita Felix-Corrall, Kevin Longmore, Carmen Morales-Guarda, Gillian White); "Informal Practitioner Theory: Eliciting the Implicit" (Yvonne Hillier); "Guidance as Research, Teaching, and Learning" (Anne-Marie Houghton); "Getting Connected: Involving Part-Time Tutors of Adults in Researching Their Own Development" (Ann Jackson); "Adult Learning in Civil Society: Exploring Roles for Adult Educators" (Rennie Johnston); "The Experience of Young Adults in Transition: Making Connections" (Rob Lawy); "College Knowledge: Power, Policy, and the Mature Student Experience at University" (Mark Murphy, Ted Fleming); "Connecting the Personal and the Social: Using Auto/Biography for Interdisciplinary Research and Learning About Experience" (Nod Miller, Linden West); "Professional Development, Teaching, and Lifelong Learning: Is There a Connection?" (Gill Nicholls); "Researching Learning: A United Kingdom/Singapore Comparison" (Janet Parr);

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"Collaborative Research: A Disturbing Practice" (Nicky Solomon); "Only Connect: Constructing the Compleat Adult Educator/Student" (Malcolm Tight); "Post-Modern Teaching: The Facilitation of Learning" (Li-Jiuan Lilie Tsay); "Lost and Found: 'Cyberspace' and the (Dis)location of Teaching, Learning, and Research" (Robin Usher, Richard Edwards); "The Little Boy and His Antics: Redefining Knowledge in Development Worker Training" (Astrid von Kotze); "Obsessives, Groupies, and the Role of Research in Adult Education" (Chris Wiltsher); and "Combining Teaching, Learning, and Research" (David Wray). Each paper contains references. (KC)

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UNIVERSITY of EXETER

SCUTREA

NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

Research, teaching, learning:

making connections

in the education of adults

Proceeding of the 28th Annual Conference

University of Exeter, 1998

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Edited by Roseanne Benn

Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults

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Research, Teaching, Learning:

Making Connections in the Education of Adults

Edited by Roseanne Benn

Papers from the 28th Annual Conference

University of Exeter, 6 - 8 July 1998

Standing Conference of University Teaching and Researchin the Education of Adults

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The Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA)

SCUTREA is a forum for all concerned with research into the education of adults and those involved with the development of adult education as a body of knowledge. It began as an organisation with a membership consisting solely of university departments of adult education. SCUTREA now draws upon a broader constituency and welcomes individual and institutional members from across the international educational field. Adult education is a growing and fast changing sector and SCUTREA currently provides a focus for the diverse interests of practitioners and researchers. It is a pivotal point in the adult education world in Britain, and is also linked to organisations in both the North and South, enhancing members' access to international contacts.

The SCUTREA Annual conference is a major event in the adult education calendar. In addition, smaller workshops, conferences and seminars are organised throughout the year, often jointly with other national organisations promoting the interests of adult and continuing education research and practice. Members' research and teaching interests are linked through working groups which any member is welcome to join.

The dynamism of SCUTREA is reflected in the publications which have been generated from the working groups and conferences and the organisation has moved into an expansive period during the current decade. The organisation produces a quarterly newsletter, SCOOP, to keep members up to date.

Membership is open to individual and institutions who are accepted by Council as 'making a contribution to the study of or research into any aspect of learning, education or training in adulthood'.

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Table of contents

	Page
Editorial - Research, Teaching and Learning in the Education of Adults: what connections? Roseanne Benn, University of Exeter, UK	1
Rhetoric and reification: disconnecting research, education and learning in the 'learning society' Paul Armstrong, Birkbeck College, University of London, UK	4
Reconstructing academic practice: research and teaching in a university school of adult education David Boud, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia	10
The model is the message: research, teaching and learning: curriculum connections in the education of adults Darol Cavanagh, Northern Territory University, Darwin, Australia	16
'The Old Bush School' Research, teaching and learning need management to make connections in adult education Ray Cleary, University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia	22
Re-searching adult education practice: paradoxes and possibilities Allie Clemans, Monash University, Australia	28
Developing critical literacy in the context of democratic renewal in Scotland Jim Crowther and Lyn Tett, Moray House Institute, Edinburgh, Scotland	35
Learning in virtual space: potential and pitfalls in electronic communication Mike Davis and Kate Denning, University of Manchester, UK	41
Centering a degree on the periphery: curriculum design in Cornwall and the politics of place Bernard Deacon and Ella Westland, University of Exeter, UK	47
What is mind? It doesn't matter. What matter? Never mind. Catherine Edwards, University of Sheffield, UK	52
Only connect: learning, teaching and researching among the screams Wilma Fraser, Workers Educational Association; Jenny Knight, East Kent Community National Health Service Trust; Linden West, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK	57
A gendered appraisal of the transition to a Learning Society in Britain Stephen Gorard, Emma Renold, Gareth Rees, Ralph Fevre and John Furlong, University of Wales, Cardiff, UK	62
Enquiring into Group Learning On-line Celia Graebner, University of Sheffield, UK	68
Teaching managers how to learn: the changing role of management educators Roger Hall and Caroline Rowland, Stockport Business School, UK	78
Becoming expert: using ethnographies of everyday learning to inform the education of adults Mary Hamilton, University of Lancaster, UK	84
The fact and (moral) value distinction in adult education work intentionally targeting social exclusion Keith Hammond, University of Glasgow, UK	91
Making links between teaching and research: an example from an inquiry into networked learning Michael Hammond, University of Sheffield, UK	96
The trinity ring of knowledge: teaching, learning and research William Hampton and Danny Mashengele in association with Fang Xiao, Conchita Felix-Corrall, Kevin Longmore, Carmen Morales-Guarda and Gillian White, University of Sheffield, UK	102
Informal practitioner theory: eliciting the implicit Yvonne Hillier, City University, UK	107
Guidance as research, teaching and learning Anne-Marie Houghton, University of Lancaster, UK	113
Compartments, connections and consciousness: changing perspectives on a learning journey Cheryl Hunt, University of Sheffield, UK	119

Getting connected: involving part-time tutors of adults in researching their own development 126
Ann Jackson, East Riding of Yorkshire community Education Service, UK

The contribution of teaching, textual interpretation and pedagogical research to understanding the development of critical consciousness 132
Christine Jarvis, University of Huddersfield, UK

Adult learning in civil society - exploring roles for adult educators 138
Rennie Johnston, University of Southampton, UK

Sticking together: teaching, learning and the art of research 144
Helen Jones and Martin Notley, University of Huddersfield, UKb

The experience of young adults in transition: making connections 150
Rob Lawy, Highlands College, Jersey, UK

Degrees of learning: researching adult students' and lecturers' perspectives on teaching and lea[illegible]g in university 156
Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick, UK

Connecting the personal and the social: using auto/biography for interdisciplinary research and learning about experience 163
Nod Miller, University of East-London, UK and Linden West, University of Kent, UK

College knowledge: power, policy and the mature student experience at university 169
Mark Murphy, University College Dublin, Ireland and Ted Fleming, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Researching flexible learning within the postmodern: a role for the 'specific intellectual'? 175
Kathy Nicoll, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Professional development, teaching, and lifelong learning: Is there a connection? 180
Gill Nicholls, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

Researching Learning: A United Kingdom/Singapore comparison 185
Janet Parr, University of Sheffield, UK

Research, teaching and learning: Making connections 192
Nick Small,. Open University, UK

Collaborative research: A disturbing practice 200
Nicky Solomon, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Part-time student, tutors and the accredited histroy curriculum: a case study 207
Lynne Thompson, University of Exeter, UK

Only connect: constructing the compleat adult educator/student 213
Malcolm Tight, University of Warwick, UK

Post-modern teaching: the facilitation of learning 219
Li-Jiuan Tsay, University of Nottingham, UK

Lost and found: cyberspace and the (dis)location of teaching, learning and research 225
Robin Usher, University of Southampton, UK and Richard Edwards, Open University, UK

The little boy and his antics: re-defining knowledge in development worker training 231
Astrid Von Kotze, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa

The silent death of the radical voice: knowledge and the South African state 236
John Wallis, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa

Learning together about spirituality: a cooperative inquiry group 242
Gillian White, University of Sheffield, UK

Obsessives, groupies and the role of research in adult education 247
Chris Wiltsher, University of Sheffield, UK

Combining Teaching, Learning and Research 252
David Wray, University of Northumbria, UK

Research, teaching, learning in the education of adults: what connections?

Roseanne Benn, University of Exeter, UK

The theme of a SCUTREA conference is always chosen to be of current interest, fundamental to the field and, most importantly, inclusive of the whole body of researchers and practitioners in adult education. It should appeal to an international audience and to those not only in traditional university adult education but also those in the ever widening body of academics interested in research in continuing education. This year we had no problems locating the theme. The emphasis of governments both in the UK and elsewhere on post-compulsory education and the prevalent climate of lifelong learning and the learning society which permeates thinking has moved the education of adults from the margins to the mainstream. Adult education is now seen as a 'good for all', rather than the preserve of a self-selected privileged coterie. Though this has been the goal of many adult educators over their working lives, these developments have brought attendant stresses and strains. Adult educators may no longer need to struggle for recognition in their institutions and indeed the glare of the spotlight is on them and their work. However obscurity, though carrying with it lack of status and resources, often ensured freedom while centre stage brings opportunities but associated constraints. As a body of professionals we need more than ever to continuously re-examine our values, theories and practices through individual and group reflection to ensure that current developments serve learners' needs rather than institutional or national convenience.

As part of this on-going reflexive practice and as a contribution to the learning society debate, the theme of this conference was chosen to explore the connections between three fundamentals to our work - research, teaching and learning. The call for papers for this Conference argued that it has sometimes been assumed that there is an osmotic relationship between research, teaching and learning in post-compulsory education. We can no longer make this assumption: the connections need to be demonstrable and transparent. Many people are now critically asking about the connection between teaching and learning. If we emphasise the desirability of self-directed learning and the autonomous learner: what price teaching? Does the tutor still have a role? Is that role any longer dependent on expert knowledge or is it very largely to do with the facilitation of learning? What does this mean for professionalisation?

In the UK, the spotlight has recently been turned on the relationship between teaching/learning on the one hand and research on the other, not least because of the Research Assessment Exercises. A debate has opened up about whether research informs teaching (and learning) or whether they can be separated, with research concentrated in a relatively few research-based institutions, without being detrimental to teaching. The alleged distinction between research and scholarship is a crucial matter. All these issues are of great significance to researchers and teachers in adult education, but they are also faced with another dimension to the quest for meaningful connections: if there is a vital link between research and teaching/learning, what is the proper focus of that research - a subject discipline or adult education/adult learning?

Connections between research, teaching and learning is the focus of the 28th SCUTREA Conference. Are there connections? Have there ever been connections? Or are there just fragments, with researchers, teachers and learners all doing their own thing in post-modern isolation? Are connections - or lack of them - perceived differently in different countries and cultures?

It was hoped that by examining these questions, we, as individuals and/or as members of institutions, might be better able to get beneath the easy rhetoric of lifelong learning and rebuild a solid intellectual basis for the education of adults.

To what extent has the Conference succeeded in its aims? It has attracted eighty four registrations from nine countries. The authors of the forty three papers have taken the opportunity to explore some of the issues in such a way as to indicate the central importance of the theme to their research and teaching practice. No paper questions the desirability of connections and links between research, teaching and learning in the education of adults but clearly the constraints, consequences, forces and influences on the connections are not absolute nor indeed absolutely straightforward. The papers make fascinating and stimulating reading with certain sub-themes or strands emerging quite clearly. A dominant theme is the dichotomy articulated by Rennie Johnston as 'adult educators, both researchers and teachers, need to avoid the danger of radical rhetoric allied to essentially conservative institutional practice.' Related to this is the concern over government agency with its requirement for quick fix solutions which are cheap and immediate. These and other issues are explored through critiques of the notion of lifelong learning and the learning society; questions about the place of critical adult education in our 'brave new world'; issues around the role of curriculum and pedagogy (particularly notions of culture and critiques of self-directed learning); and explorations of the inter-relationship between learning and education/ individualism and collectivism. Further factors including new modes of learning utilising modern technology, explore the same issues but from a different perspective. There is a pervading search for a role for adult education research and teaching that serves the interest of adult learners whilst avoiding dangers of tokenism or rhetorical mythology.

The concept of the learning society is questioned by several authors. All assert that, though popular in the global context and representing a convergence of political ideas, it is more rhetoric than reality. It is critiqued on several grounds including the accusation that it encourages a disconnection between learning and teaching through an emphasis on student directed learning and competencies. This results in the onus of responsibility moving from provider (education) to the individual (learning). This may be viewed optimistically as responding to the individual learner or cynically as a way of economising in a period of limited resource. Either way, it is arguable that the learning society is the ultimate in individualism and a complete rejection of collective endeavour.

The aims and purposes of the learning society are also questioned, asking whether today's learning society provides the same breadth of education and critical awareness. As Stephen Gorard and his co-authors suggest 'it is clear that policy makers arguing for a new Learning Society do not really want learning to lead to critical dialogue and action to improve the quality of life of the whole community.' This need to prioritise critical thinking and social action is echoed elsewhere in the papers . By arguing that teaching should not simply support existing knowledge but continually questions it, the place of the educator is reclaimed in the lifelong learning world. Similarly the role of research in leading us to challenge practice is identified. Within this discourse, the assumption that self-directed learning is an uncontested good is questioned. Others see the crucial role of teaching and research in learning as ensuring the validation of subordinate cultures and the development of critical faculties whilst at the same time fostering the acquisition of skills required by the learner. Much of the criticism lies in the fear that the learning society provides a politically acceptable framework for 'quick and dirty' research, provision and pedagogy rather than a more difficult (and expensive) academic and critical approach.

The social purpose concept of adult education is reinforced through the resurgence of interest in adult learning and the civil society. The two papers from South Africa bring this into focus with Astride Van Kotze's examination of the implementation of adult education research in a developing context and her assertion that ' participatory teaching, learning and research is not a technique but an ethical and moral decision that takes a standpoint'. This is very interestingly balanced by John Wallis' exploration of the irony that a radical voice in South Africa has been silenced by the move into power (an argument explored in a different time and another part of Africa by Benn and Fieldhouse 1995).

The role of government is also examined through an examination by several of the authors of the criteria by which research, teaching and learning are judged. The valuing or otherwise of work and subsequent rewards or penalties will vary depending on the criteria used which highlights the Foucauldian power/knowledge relationship. Alternative views are expressed by contributors: for

example, one arguing that judgements should be based not just on job outcomes but also on a more just social reality while another bemoans the lack of value accorded by the Research Assessment Exercise to the practical outcomes of vocational education. The value of research, teaching and learning in adult education is variously seen as primarily contributing to economic development or as having the wider remit of contributing to the civil society, social justice and individual empowerment. It is widely assumed in the papers that where the heavy hand of government leads, finance and hence institutions will follow. This despite the fact that many of the criteria set by government such as the current preoccupation with partnership between industry and different sectors of the education system are highly problematic as partners may and often do have conflicting goals.

Several of the papers locate their discussion in the area of curriculum and pedagogy. The issue which has engaged educators' minds for many years as to whether the separation of teaching from research is a function of the curriculum model adopted arises again with passionate arguments both for and against the discipline centred or learner/experience approach. These are accompanied by pleas for an enhancement of the adult education experience by the presence of active researchers, both tutor and students, in the class. Self-directed learning is critiqued and alternatives such as co-operative enquiry groups proposed as a vehicle for challenging the divisions between research, teaching and learning. The importance of high quality research to underpin curriculum and pedagogical developments is discussed. by several authors. Barbara Merrill illustrates the need for adult educators to disseminate the results of their research to a wider audience through her interviews with university lecturers in discipline departments. We should perhaps also take on board their criticisms that experiential teaching methods encourage rather than challenge entrenched attitudes and many adults come to learning to escape experience.

Underpinning many of the discussions in this area is the critical importance of culture in the research, teaching and learning processes. Without an awareness of gender/ class/ place learning is inhibited. This emphasises the need to build local culture and perspectives into research, teaching or learning programmes. Vernacular practices need to be acknowledged and respected and the conflict between college knowledge and ethno-knowledge addressed and resolved if access is to be genuinely widened.

These issues are addressed in some way by the emphasis of many papers on telling a story whether that story be the author's, the students' or that of the researched. This is the way by which some feel that 'silent voices' can be heard. Some authors advocate reflective practice, often using their own autobiography to illustrate the connections between research, teaching and learning.

The strands outlined above are sometimes illustrated through a particular context, for example literacy or guidance. This is particularly so in the papers which argue that research into experiences of new technology can inform practice of teaching and learning. The lens of this still very new mode of study is particularly illuminating in the study of 'old' problems. The importance of taking part but acknowledging different ways of participating is illustrated interestingly through terminology of 'lurking in cyberspace' and 'the clamour of f2f seminars'. Different modes allow different opportunities to participate.

So - a wide-ranging selection of papers. Different discourses with much in common. The ingredients for a lively and stimulating conference, but as importantly, valuable ideas to take home to the overwhelming noise of our day-to-day lives that we can mull over later and incorporate into our practices of research, teaching and learning and our continuing struggle to achieve first not second class opportunities for adult learners.

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Rhetoric and reification: disconnecting research, teaching and learning in the 'learning society'

Paul Armstrong, Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

> ... *the learning society is suspiciously unchallengeable.*
> (Schuller, 1998, 11)

Introduction

This paper takes issue with the notion of the 'learning society, arguing that the concept is no more than a representation of the convergence of political views one education, which fails to challenge hegemony, and therefore does not, without re-conceptualisation and clarification, offer a genuine vision for the future. In common with the idea of 'community', the 'learning society' is warm, with positive even romantic connotations; for others it is an emollient (Coffield, 1997, 450). This paper argues that this is a veneer, glossing over fundamental political and cultural differences that are no longer exposed for critical examination. At one level that critique has been provided. For example, Hughes and Tight (1995) dismiss the concept as pure ideology, serving ideological purposes, whereas Edwards (1995, 1997) has recognised the need for 'greater critical clarity' of the idea, and goes on to debate whether it is 'a' or 'the' 'learning society'. Holford (1998) says that the concept is flawed and undertheorised, in need of re-historicisation. It is not merely a matter of drawing boundaries around the notion, but to expose the political uses of the idea, the implied convergence, and – importantly – the implicit paradoxes and contradictions (Jarvis, forthcoming).

My argument is based on the view that this notion can only be sustained because the component parts – 'learning ' and 'society' are not subject to sustained critique, and within the meanings of the concept, learning is disconnected from teaching, and both are disconnected from research. If this is so, then this is a major contradiction in the idea of the learning society. The analysis of what would constitute *the* or even *a* 'learning society' will reveal that this is rhetorical construct, based on axiomatic or questionable assumptions about 'learning' and about 'society'. This paper demonstrates the rhetorical nature of the 'learning society'.

The idea is also an uncritical reification. As Margaret Thatcher once said, there is no such thing as society. Right for the wrong reasons, in line with Edwards (1995) and Keep (1997), I agree that far from being the possessive individualism of new liberalism, the 'social' exists in the complex network of human relationships, emotions and values that form the basis of identifiable cultures, of which 'learning' is but one form. Whether 'learning' is an innate drive, as some would argue, hardly matters. What is more important is the recognition of that value placed on learning, and the need to continue to challenge - whose values? (Jarvis, 1997) – whose learning society? (Macrae, Maguire and Ball, 1997)

There is a degree of agreement in the literature that 'learning' is not an adjective, but an action, an engagement with experience that brings about change. Those who for one reason or another (which could be studied and understood through biographical research) choose not to change have learned not to learn. How can the rhetorical and reified notion of a 'learning society' take on board the fact that many people learn not to learn? Some commentators would argue that is precisely why we need to have a 'cultural revolution' in order to bring about a 'learning society', so ensure that everyone learns to value learning. Where does this leave debates about recognising the value of cultural diversity, about empowerment of communities of interest to decide for themselves? Have we gone any further than the 'liberal' ideology that suggests that these communities cannot be empowered unless they learn to value education? This is an old debate that the notion of the 'learning society' contains, but does not encourage the exploration of paradox and contradiction, and thereby leaves the world unchanged.

Rehistoricisation

The notion of the learning society is not new. Indeed, this year is the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Robert Hutchins's book, *The Learning Society*. He opens with a prophetic statement predicting that 'in the twenty-first century education may at least come into its own.' (Hutchins, 1968, 13):

> In the closing decades of the twentieth century, education seemed destined to become the principal preoccupation of all states. Once a luxury of rich countries and individuals, a means of preparing citizens for their station in life ... education came to be regarded as at once a right of the individual and a necessity to the state. (Hutchins, 1968, 14)

The identically titled, *The Learning Society* by Torsten Husén (1974) is the starting point for Coffield's (1997) discussion. Published nearly 25 years ago, Husén's predictions for the millenium 'have proved to be wildly inaccurate' (Coffield, 1997, 249). Coffield states that all this indicates is the 'plasticity' and 'multi-dimensionality' of the term 'learning society', which serves different purposes at different historical moments. Postmodernists not only seek to deconstruct but de-historicise the concept of the learning society. Holford (1998) agrees that the learning society does not represent a 'break with the past', recognises the possibility that a learning society could be at the same time a reflexive society at times of 'risk', and argues for the re-historicisation of the concept. I would agree with this, since this would require reconnection to research activities, albeit within historiography.

Contradiction

Lack of space prevents further detailed analysis of the 'history' of the notion of the learning society over the past 30 years. However, there are some key issues that need to be subject to critical reflection:

- 'in' versus 'toward'
- economic versus social and cultural regeneration
- local versus global
- political convergence versus cultural diversity
- 'a' versus 'the'
- society versus identity
- education versus learning
- educational research versus political rhetoric

'in' versus 'toward'

Much of the literature on the learning society since 1968 mixes metaphors. Van der Zee (1991) propoes that the learning society is itself a metaphor. For others, it is a journey, a creation, a construction, a realisation, something to be joined, something that grows or needs cultivation, or a paradigm shift presents the view that we are moving 'towards' the learning society, and those who assume we are already living in that society. Hutchins (1968) was looking forward to it, as was Husén (1974, 1986). Ranson (1994), Feutrie (1996) and Schuller (1998), in line with the much earlier Carnegie Commission (1973) was clear that we are moving towards the learning society, and the questions are to do with which way it is (Edwards, 1995). This implies that the learning society already exists, that we know what it is, we will recognise it when we arrive. . The Labour Party (1993) uses the metaphor of opening a door, again as if the learning society already exists, and its simply matter of finding the key, to open up this utopian society. However, others, including Duke (1991, 1992) and Dearing (1997) write as if we are already living in such a society, and the questions are to do with how we can learn to live in the learning society. The Fryer Report (1997), however, made a strong response to Dearing, by pointing out that we are nowhere near being a learning society – there is a need for deep-rooted cultural change, a fundamental change in attitudes toward education and learning, among employers and communities. This debate reflects the lack of agreement that exists about what the 'learning society' about what it actually is.

economic versus social and cultural regeneration

Cynicism about the notion of the learning society probably stems from the fact that when the term was appropriated by both the European Commission and the UK government in the 1990s, it was very much linked to the idea of economic regeneration, as a means of providing employers with an appropriately skilled (or de-skilled?) workforce, and for finding ways to remove unemployed from welfare. This seems to have been an underlying assumption of the ESRC's Learning Society research project, but one that came to be challenged by the project's director:

> What in my view has happened in the past 20 years is that right wing governments have appropriated the terms 'a Learning Society' and 'lifelong learning' in order to promote a particular view of the future ... (Coffield, 1997, 449)

This is one of three meanings embedded in the notion of the learning society recognised by Edwards (1995, 1997) – the learning market – a means of supporting the competitiveness of the economy. It is no more than an extension of education and economic policies that have prevailed since the mid-1970s, but the language has been 'humanised'. Neither Hutchins nor Husén, whilst recognising the value of learning for work, would have wanted to have narrowed down the vision of a learning society to one that was merely tackling unemployment and the need for economic competitiveness. Indeed, the point they make is about the impact of technology and economic forces that have the potential to ease or release people from the demands of economic work, to create space for learning, which may bring individual, community, cultural or social benefits. Some might argue that this is a requirement for effective democracy, equity and citizenship. What such a view continues to do, however, is to fragment people's identities, separating the economic from other aspects of their lives, whether for positive or negative reasons.

local versus global

As Macrae and others (1997) recognise, the learning society is not a uniform or nationwide phenomenon, but has localised and regional variations. One of the current paradoxes we face is that with increasing globalisation, we are increasingly aware of the local. For example, whilst economic regeneration has become a global issue, its shape and process is determined by local awareness of needs. Whilst the idea of a learning society can be found all around the world (for example, Faure, 1972; Boshier ,1980[1]), the contestation of meaning and cultural differences become much sharper, than the discrepancies in meaning in just one culture (which are diverse enough).

political convergence versus cultural diversity

This suggests - as an aspect of globalisation - there is a political convergence over ideas such as the learning society. It is as if, for example, European discussions apply equally to all parts of Europe – urban or rural, among all cultures and political perspectives both across and within nations. In Britain, for example, the first political party to include the idea of the learning society in their educational policy statement was the Social and Liberal Democrats in 1988. By the mid-1990s the Labour Party was committing its educational policies toward the creation of a learning society. Around the same time, the Conservative Government produced a consultative paper on its version of the learning society. What we are witnessing is the convergence and centring of political ideas on education and learning.

'a' versus 'the'

In identifying substantively different meanings embedded in the notion of the learning society, Edwards (1997) evaporates the problem by distinguishing '*a* learning society' from '*the* learning society'. The postmodernist solution is to propose there is no such thing '*the* learning society'. We need to both deconstruct the diverse range of meanings that are embedded in *the* learning society, as well as to study 'a learning society' in its context, its culture, its particular meanings' rather than assume there is a universal model. So, what does this mean?

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[1] In the interests of space, references are necessarily limited here. Search 'learning society' on the web to find a far more extensive list of global references.

> A learning society is constructed and legitimised within a modernist meta-narrrative of emancipatory progress, aimed at creating the conditions for self-realisation and citizenship within a liberal democracy. (Edwards, 1997, 176)

Of course, there is much insight to be gained from the Lyotardian recognition that the

> notion of a learning society can be seen as part of a modernising discourse .. to be located within a postmodern condition of performativity in which knowledge is valued on the basis of its usefulness to the functioning of the social formation (Edwards, 1977, 181)

But we do need to go further by problematising not just 'a' or 'the', but also 'learning', and as Edwards himself does, 'society'.

society versus identity

The use of 'society' in the phrase 'learning society' is an objectification. In one of Edwards's three meanings of learning society – that of a learning market, 'society is reconfigured as the contractual and consumer relations of individuals' (Edwards, 1997, 181). However, his concern with 'society' is not in its objectification per se, but in the blurring of boundaries between nations and cultures, or 'less bounded sociality. In challenging belongingness versus self-interested individualism, Edwards raises the possibility that the challenge to a learning *society* is the fact that a 'society is not a bounded entity, but an interactive space of multiple shared sentiments, collective bonds and customs, of sociality'. Society' – we are reminded – is both a construction and a reification, a legacy of nineteenth century social scientists wishing to establish their disciplinary boundaries, whether it is a local or a global society. Paradoxically, the answer is not to substitute 'society' for 'market' or 'network'; or, age, nation, community, culture, organisation, university or any other noun or object that may be prefixed with 'learning', but to recognise, reflexively, that 'society' is not only a social formation, but an important part of the continuing process of self and identity construction.

education versus learning

In trying to specify the significance of the learning society, there seems to be a need to distinguish education and learning. An implicit theme in the discussion is that in a learning society, there will be a revaluing of learning, and not just that which takes place in formal education. This assumption is to be found in both Hutchins and Husén. This is not surprising, for at that time there was a good deal of emphasis on de-schooling society, increasing emphasis on nonformal and informal learning. The contemporary version of this is echoed in the Labour Government's green paper (DfEE, 1998b) which broadens the notion of participation in learning, by focusing on the home, the community and – more traditionally now – the workplace. The advantages of technology are that informal learning will be facilitated through the idea of a 'national grid' (DfEE, 1998a) as a means of 'connecting the learning society'. In other words, the current emphasis on lifelong learning in the learning society is not necessarily assuming the expansion of formal education. But, in contradiction, the discussions around government policy have tended to focus on the expansion of both the FE and HE sectors to cope with the increased demand for learning (see also Coffield, 1996?). Of course, some of this demand will be met by the new virtual university, the University for Industry. However, given that this might end up merely as a broker for other institutions' programmes, then the dominance of education over learning might prevail. There are clear contradictions in the policies that have not shifted the emphasis on vocational relevance, accreditation and qualification towards learning for citizenship, or 'for its own sake', except as lip-service.

Learning is, like the de-reification of 'society', a reflexive process. It is a verb, an activity; not an adjective. Neither an age, a nation, an organisation, an university, nor a society can 'learn'. Edwards talks about one meaning of 'learning society' meaning an 'educated society' (committed to active citizenship, liberal democracy and equal opportunities), and this overcomes the use of learning to describe that object (although its does not overcome the objectification).

educational research versus political rhetoric

The postmodernist deconstruction of 'a/the learning society' exposes the potential of the phrase as political rhetoric. Edwards does recognise the concept is prone to 'hype', and that there is 'much rhetorical support for a conception of a learning society' (Edwards, 1997, 174-175). But is this all there is too it, a piece of political rhetoric that is sustained by rhetorical support? In the mid-1990s, presumably as part of the hype, the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK funded a programme of research to investigate the parameters of a learning society. It is interesting to observe that Edwards notes this in passing, but does not even pause to examine the connections of research with his arguments. This research programme, directed by Coffield, is made up of 14 projects which serve to reflect the highly contested and multi-dimensional nature of the concept, but which nevertheless come together to address three core questions:

Although it is not possible to do justice in the space that remains to this large-scale programme of research, the important point to note is that whatever the imbibed or embedded meanings of 'a' or 'the' learning society, it is not only possible, but important to critically probe political rhetoric and socio-cultural reification, to understand the social meanings that individuals in building their social identities bring to, or take from such notions. Socially constructed or not, they are 'real in their consequences' for people, whether in terms of economic distribution of resources, or opening up/closing down access to political power, and its social and education research that provides a fertile field for ensuring that the degree of critical thinking about such notions take place, rather than assumed. Research needs to be re-connected.

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Reconstructing academic practice: research and teaching in a university school of adult education

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Introduction

The 1990s are especially challenging times for adult educators. The great movement from which many have drawn their identity has been overtaken by a wider range of interests in adults learning throughout society. The learning of adults is no longer an topic confined to the few. It is the concern of a large proportion of the population in their personal, work and community lives and it is a matter of interest to governments and organisations of all kinds. The role of a university school or department of adult education in such circumstances is particularly challenging. How does it acknowledge its traditions while striking out in new directions? How does it respond to pressing issues in the field while at the same time responding to the demands which follow from its place in a university? There are no easy answers. Many interests are involved. The challenge to identity is discomforting and new expectations are arising continuously.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to discussion about the reconstruction of academic practice by exploring the place of research and teaching in an adult education department in a particular setting. The department in question has by many measures been successful, but it is currently experiencing a process of restructuring and a reappraisal of its priorities. The paper outlines the continuing transformation of the department over a twenty year period from being a peripheral part of a teachers' college to becoming a large and well-known school in a university. It portrays the background and present context, raises questions about the roles of research, teaching and practice and explores the contributions to adult education which location in a university both permits and inhibits.

The relationship between teaching and research is problematic in all fields and the divide between the two is the subject of criticisms of universities. Adult education shares the same problems of relating to its field of practice as other professional faculties. However, there is a special obligation for adult educators to practice what they preach as their teaching and research are expected to model good educational practice. They are specially open to scrutiny from the experienced practitioners who form a large proportion of their students. It is not at all obvious, however, what practising what one preaches means in the present changing context.

The development of a school of adult education

The focus of the paper is adult education at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). (It is referred to as a 'department' for reasons of convenience as it has been known under a variety of names.) It forms a large part of a Faculty of Education which also includes teacher education. It defines itself in terms of involvement with all those areas in which adults learn, whether in formal or non-formal contexts, whether directly facilitated or not. There are substantial award courses in community adult education, human resource development, literacy and numeracy, TESOL, technical and further education and other aspects of professional and higher education. Courses are offered at all levels from Bachelors to Doctorates. It is unlike many other adult education departments in universities for a number of reasons. It is large (around 50 academic staff). In contrast to former extra-mural or continuing education departments it is not a general provider of adult education and was not founded in the tradition of university liberal adult education.

What was until a recent restructuring, the School of Adult Education, emerged originally from the technical teacher education section of a teacher training college. This provided initial professional education for teachers in the New South Wales Technical and Further Education system (TAFE). In 1990 it was incorporated into a newly amalgamated university (UTS) during the major reorganisation of Australian higher education. It moved from the former College of Advanced Education sector in

which there was little expectation of research on the part of staff, to the unified university sector, and took on the expectations which accompanied that change.

It can be useful to see the development of the department in terms of three phases, each of which represented the dominant interests of staff at the time and which contributed to the philosophy and orientation of courses. Of course, at all times there have been a multiplicity of contested interests represented, and at present characteristics of all three phases are apparent in courses and research. The phases can be represented in terms of three stages of transition corresponding to three conceptions of adult education practice: moving from a technical/instructional view, a Knowlesian, humanistic view and a fragmented, postmodern view. At each transition point, new ideas tended to be represented first in teaching activities then in research.

Moving from a technical/instructional view

Up until the late 1970s emphasis was exclusively on preparing TAFE teachers. Very little research was undertaken except for a few staff undertaking doctoral studies. Courses were influenced by trends in teacher education, modified by an increasing emphasis on instructional design and cognitive psychology. The site of practice of students was unproblematic: it was clearly defined and contained within the culture of a single, highly centralised state government department.

Moving from a Knowlesian, humanistic view

By the late 1970s, it was recognised that a single focus on technical teacher education made the department vulnerable. Student numbers were dependent on the year by year recruitment patterns of one organisation, over which the department had no control. Diversification took place into the wider area of adult education following the interests and leadership of key staff members. In keeping with the dominant literature of adult education at the time, courses took on a strong Knowlesian flavour with an emphasis on self-directed learning and learning contracts. Not long after the establishment of courses for adult educators, courses for basic education workers and those in human resource development were introduced along similar humanistic lines. Commitment to social justice issues was represented particularly in work on Aboriginal community adult education and a link with earlier adult education traditions was thus forged.

Moving from a fragmented, postmodern view

Diversification continued with the introduction of courses for TESOL teachers and the appointment of staff with interests in applied linguistics. This established a third point of focus and a new set of interests arose from the traditions of language teaching. However, new staff were being appointed in other areas and the total range of interests was multiplying. Alongside that, the emergence of a research culture led to a more critical focus in all aspects of the work of the School. Some teaching practices were subject to greater scrutiny and, for example, the rhetoric of self-directed learning was gradually replaced with a more sophisticated emphasis on a variety of forms of negotiated learning.

Stimulated by the interest of international visitors and the changing focus of new staff, the challenge of postmodernity came to be taken seriously. A dominant ideology, whether of a technicist, humanist or socially critical flavour, became more difficult to promote and the diversity of interests and perspectives represented in courses and in research expanded further. The logical extension of such a position: the dissolving and fragmenting of the identity of 'adult education' is represented in the most recent restructuring of the Faculty in which a separate School of Adult Education no longer exists. The programs, staff and research activities all remain, but not unified structurally under the banner of adult education.

The emergence of research

Following the amalgamation of the department into UTS in 1990, and as it further opened itself to external influences, the importance of research began to be realised. At first, the most obvious manifestation was the change of expectation in the new institution: staff were expected to engage in teaching and research and contribute to the community. Beliefs, not necessarily founded in reality,

that promotion was to be based on research performance took root. However, there were enough existing staff who found the new emphasis on research liberating, and others who joined them, that new ways of thinking about the research role arose. Research was seen as significant both for pragmatic reasons—to benefit the position of individuals and the status of adult education in the university—but also because it offered the opportunity to understand and contribute to the field of practice. Research was seen as a way to engage more deeply with adult education issues and to work with practitioners to add perspectives which could only be achieved from the vantage point of research.

Many staff took to the challenge with relish. There was more interaction with the external environment than previously and national and international contacts grew more diverse. Recognition of achievements made boosted self-esteem and cemented a growing reputation for the whole enterprise. However, problems remained. There were numbers of staff who were either not able to or not interested in responding to the challenge of research. They had not come from a tradition which understood the kinds of contribution which research can make—they did not for example have a research degree—or they did not value this aspect of academic work—they saw research as drawing attention away from the core activity of working with students. Even among the active scholars and researchers there were different views of what constituted research in adult education and a number of stereotypes of research and researchers held by the others did not correspond with any of these views.

This observation points to the need to conceptualise the role of research in adult education as not independent of, or counter to, good practice. Some conceptions of research may lead to outcomes which do *not* contribute to the field of practice. The challenge is to find those conceptions which do.

Conceptualising adult education research

Despite assertions to the contrary, adult education research for the most part is not characteristically different from research in any area in which there are associated fields of practice. It shares with other areas of human activity values of doing research with, rather than on, others and, like most professional areas, has concerns about research influencing practice.

If we turn to the wider area of educational research, where there is a clear common interest with adult education, we find similar interests: What is the relationship between research and practice? What models of research are appropriate and effective? How can research and teaching be linked? As a participant in the Australian National Strategic Review of Research in Education—an exercise which attempted to justify enhanced public spending on educational research and which included adult education—I was confronted with the difficulty of articulating the impact of research on education. While various arguments were presented in the final report (McGaw et al 1992), the one which I found most credible was that research influences practice not through the application of research 'findings', but through the process of naming and exploring important issues. The way I describe this now is in terms of the way research gives language to phenomena which those involved in the practice of education (as teachers, learners, policy-makers, administrators and researchers) find meaningful. It enables them to move beyond their experience through the provision of conceptual tools they can use to interrogate, critique and learn from their experience (cf. Usher 1993).

One of the difficulties of undertaking and promoting research in the context of a department such as the one described here is that staff come from different research traditions. Not only do staff attitudes to research reflect the disciplines in which they receive their research training, but they are not always aware that disciplinary research can be problematic when transferred to new fields of practice such as adult education. Only a small number of staff have undertaken PhDs in adult education. Many have come from disciplines which adopt a quantitative and often positivistic approach to research as well as a diverse range of others.

Research, teaching and practice

If adult education research is to be a key feature of university adult education practice, then it needs to be located within a conception of the work of adult educators which combines research, teaching and

other forms of practice. While such a conception can be drawn from adult education itself, I believe that there are a number of fruitful ideas in the literature on higher education. Four sets of ideas are sketched below to provide sources for discussion of reconceptualising university adult education practice. The first places learning as the central link in all we do. The second refocuses the idea of university education towards critical practice. The third reformulates roles of academics in terms of different kinds of scholarship and the fourth points to new ways of thinking about inquiry which link teaching and research.

There has been an unnecessary and unhelpful polarisation in universities between research, teaching and practice. Following the activities of some practitioners in the quantitative disciplines, barriers have been erected between the teaching and research functions of academics. An example of such polarisation can be found in the fruitless literature on correlations (or lack of them) between measures of teaching and of research in universities (Brew and Boud 1995). However, such a divergence is a product of an impoverished view of both research and teaching. There is a clear link between the two which should be obvious to adult educators: they are both about learning (Brew and Boud 1995). A focus on learning can bring ideas of research and teaching closer together so that the gulf which exists in some disciplines is avoided. Such a focus has implications for adult education both in the conduct of research (which needs to place greater emphasis on the learning of the researcher) and the nature of teaching (which needs to be more inquiry oriented).

A second source of ideas that can link research, teaching and practice is found in an interesting series of books by Ronald Barnett. In the latest (1997) he suggests that viewing university education as about promoting critical thinking is much too limited. He argues that we should dispense with critical thinking as a core concept of higher education and replace it with a wider concept of critical being. He emphasises the importance of critical self-reflection, critical communication and critical action as central components of higher education. Barnett suggests in his analysis of the role of university education that in order to foster critical action, teaching needs to become more research-like.

Interestingly, Barnett's view of the university parallels some aspects of the view of adult educators about the role of adult education. He stresses that

> ... the full potential of critical being will only be achieved ... through the integration of its expression in the three domains of knowledge, self and world, and in being lived out at the highest levels of critique in each domain. Through such an integration of the critical spirit, critical but creative persons will result, capable of living effectively in the world. (1997: 8)

A third set of ideas to be considered is provided by the work of the late Ernest Boyer and his colleagues at the Carnegie Foundation. Boyer argues that 'the most important obligation now confronting ... colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar.' (Boyer 1990: xii). His analysis of scholarship in higher education (a term which he believes transcends the teaching/research divide) led him to define four kinds of scholarship and unpack the many different notions which are taken for granted in discussions of research. These were: the scholarship of teaching, the scholarship of application, the scholarship of integration and the scholarship of discovery.

Boyer's colleagues continued his work and undertook a study which identified the criteria which were being used to judge scholarly work. From an extensive study in the US, Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) identified six basic criteria which apply to all four kinds of scholarship:

1. Clear goals, well defined, significant and feasible.
2. Adequate up to date preparation with a clear understanding and capacity to realise the goals, ie. competence of staff carrying out the work.
3. Choice of appropriate methods.
4. Significance of the results: that what has been accomplished adds something to the field
5. Effective communication; sharing scholarly work with others (including teaching) with a plan for reporting and dissemination.

6. Accompanied by reflective critique in which one's own learning is developed; ie. learning to do it better.

These standards, they argue, define the core of scholarly work. Replacing the notion of research with application, integration and discovery provides a more grounded way of thinking for adult educators and allows for new forms of exploration and inquiry.

A fourth challenge is posed by the analysis of Mourad (1997) derived from the critiques of postmodern thinkers on the pursuit of knowledge in higher education. He questions current notions of research and inquiry and suggests that postmodern critiques of knowledge imply that scholars are unduly limited by the belief that inquiry is fundamentally about gaining knowledge of phenomena that are assumed to exist prior to and independent of inquiry, and to persist essentially unchanged by inquiry. He regards the disciplines as potential barriers to what he sees as central to inquiry—intellectually compelling ideas. He links teaching and research through this notion of intellectually compelling ideas which are available to be investigated by inquirers who place themselves and their practice as part of the inquiry. The distinction between teaching and research dissolves as students and staff both engage in the pursuit of intellectually compelling ideas.

The challenges of reconstructing academic practice

From these different sets of ideas we can extract themes to use as the focus of debate about reconstructing academic practice in adult education. These are:

- the centrality of learning.
- a focus on critical being and critical action.
- the importance of reflective critique.
- inquiry as the basis for academic practice.

None of these themes is specific to teaching or research, each can be considered in both and similar criteria applied.

As the Faculty restructures in ways which blur formal structures separating adult education and teacher education, a new agenda is needed to focus attention on key educational issues. The written version of this paper does not permit discussion of details of this, but points for the agenda which arise from the preceding discussion include:

- The articulation of learning as central to a Faculty of Education and all its associated sites of practice.
- A focus on scholarship and inquiry as central to all aspects of an academic role.
- A reflexive approach to courses and to investigation.
- The reappraisal of courses to ensure that they equip students as self-reflective inquirers and practitioners.
- The opening of debate on academic practice and its relation to practice in the fields to which it relates.
- The provision of opportunities for the development of staff so that they can all contribute to a variety of kinds of scholarship.
- Avoidance of consigning staff to categories which imply that they do not play a full part in the life of the Faculty.
- Systems of workload allocation and resource distribution which place a focus on learning, scholarship and inquiry as central to academic work.

It is one thing to realise that most of the current discourse in higher education is about linking research, teaching and practice, quite another to translate this into the everyday thinking and operation of a Faculty. The ethos of individual autonomy in universities acts as a constraint when collective thinking and action is required. The role of staff with respect to academic activities is strongly governed by their personal history and the identities which they have of themselves as academics and the ways in which they are regarded by their peers, students and practitioners. Not

only will they resist anything which might be perceived as a threat, but we all have a vested interest in maintaining a consistent identity which may be at odds with new expectations.

The above agenda provides a considerable challenge, both for those with a research background and those without. However, it may be attractive to those who have resisted getting involved in forms of research which they do not see to be consistent with their views of good educational practice. Reappraisal of practice is always hard won, but the continual reinvention of goals and practice is required if departments are to be credible in the universities and among the practitioners of the future.

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The model is the message: research, teaching and learning: curriculum connections in the education of adults.

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Introduction

Can research be separated from teaching and learning? The answer is obviously yes! Should they be separated from each other is an entirely different dimension to do with, at the highest level, valuing and at the lowest, bureaucratic meddling and economic rationalism. Research is not cheap, and to confine it to a few institutions is continuously on the politico-economic agenda. Endless discussions within this agenda are alive and well within the Australian continent. Even within an institution recently a Vice Chancellor indicated that the funding model for faculties will now be based on a research quantum measured by reference to various outputs (publications, student graduations) and the residual allocation will be for teaching and administrative functions. One can see through this smoke screen and come up with the notion that time away from class is necessary to do research. No research no relief from class. Hence for those that can and wish to do research their teaching load will be minimised. Those who do not have the nominated outputs, their classroom teaching will increase. It is not too difficult to see a teaching-research trap in this cost based scenario where at the extremes some academics will be teachers and some researchers. Already some Australian Vice Chancellors see research and teaching as discrete entities and they are attempting politically to position their universities as research institutions. There is some feeling within the academic community that history is repeating itself and instead of Australia having a University-College of Advanced Education division based on research and teaching there will be categories of universities based on teaching or research. Previous to this in Australian educational history there existed several levels of academic institutions. When the Labor party was in power the Minister for Education, Dawkins, decided that all Colleges of Advanced Education should merge with universities. The aim of this was to reduced these disparate institutions from 70 plus to 30 plus institutions all under the umbrella of the title university. This was to take some time and not all CAE's had to surrender to a university some were to be given university status with the stroke of a pen as it were. What followed was a series of restructurings, job title swapping, creation of professoriates where non existed previously. The vain hope was that this greatly modified system would some how be cheaper and a closer match to student needs and an amalgam of teaching and research functions. However the same people exist in these institutions and the reason for there recruitment as teachers or researchers still exist. There has been some movement within these newer creations to upgrade the research function and to upgrade the teaching function within the older establishments. However on balance research is the higher status occupation and some universities typically the eight older established ones are lobbying the government for a larger slice even up to 100%! of the national research budget. It becomes apparent if this happens then the rest of the institutions will become teaching institutions !

This potential separation of teaching and research is a thorny issue clothed in philosophical stances on the value of one to the other.. To make some sense of the arguments for or against such a proposition a framework which concerns the developing, selecting and organising of that knowledge which is of most worth for teaching and learning and research needs developing. Such a framework might be able to answer the may sub questions concerning such a separation. For example why don't academics and governments agree on aspects of the separation ? Why don't academics agree whether there should be a separation ? Why doesn't the academy settle for one form of knowledge as the best form. Why is knowledge a contestable proposition? Why are various forms of research both qualitative and quantitative used to answer the pressing questions. Why are the very questions concerning discipline knowledge and private intuitive knowledge contestable?

To broach some of these questions concerning research and teaching and the development of the knowledge base that results from their interaction the developed overlay framework based on several

models of curriculum development is concerned with the following five issues: a curriculum definition for adult education; a description of the various curriculum approaches used in the literature; an analysis of the logics pertaining to each of the approaches; exploring the mismatches that occur in applying the models out of context; adopting/adapting a model to satisfy the preferred research/ teaching /learning paradigm.

Models

Cleary (1992: 117-126) presents a variety of models that have several dimensions in common. He suggests a model is a simplified representation of some aspect of the real world. It may be in the form of a diagram, a solid or a conceptual presentation. The model is used to simplify, clarify, identify and suggest explanations and consequences. Thus the following models of ' words, statements and phrases' constitute conceptual tools to be used to clarify the connections that may exist between view of teaching, learning and research. However before launching into the world of models some definitional clarity appears to be in order.

Curriculum definition

The general stock definition of curriculum generally derived from school curriculum literature is: all the experiences a child has under the direction of the school. This definition has a number of flaws not the least being the denial of an experiential component that the child brings to the school. However one of the most compelling reasons for the definition is that such a definition puts the teacher and the institution of school firmly in charge of the planning of the curriculum. However most teachers are aware that there are many experiences outside of the classroom but still inside the school that a child has . These experiences can be educational or non educational but experiences never the less. To cater to this anomaly the definition was restricted to include planned experiences and the literature expanded to include the hidden curriculum. However as will be shown later these tinkering with the definition were premised on an implicit assumption concerning one approach to the curriculum theory. For adult education the definition can be modified to substitute for, a child, an adult, and for school, institution. However such a definition only caters to formal adult education within the confines of for example community colleges, technical colleges and universities. This approach could be quite appropriate to foster the discipline approach for university departments who cater to one content based framework. However such a definition appears to run counter to vast other areas of adult education that are within a cross cultural domain or at the very least non institutional in nature.

One thing is certain that such variations in definition is an attempt to come to grips with the theoretical abstract world of academe and the pragmatic world outside the institution. They are attempts to become inclusive of the many learning styles. physical locations and environments in which adults interact with content, experience, context at the micro and macro levels. From the definitions a variety of sub contexts can be developed and examined in an attempt to understand the adult education field and to engage in quality teaching, learning and research within it.

There appears to be five defining attributes (Fielding and Cavanagh, 1983: 17-19) that encompass the range of curriculum perspectives and definitions. These minimal defining attributes are embedded in the processes of each particular curriculum development and thus implicitly and explicitly guide the idiosyncrasies of each approach. They are the bases for the particular curricular approach adopted. The defining attributes are: goal directness; means; plans; decision making prerogatives; and valuing preferences. Curriculum then is a values oriented document that encompasses action plans and the means to carry them out. Such documents also designate explicitly or implicitly who is to carry out the plans. In adult education this can be the teacher, facilitator, tutor, student/client in anyone of a number of learning locations (buildings, communities), environments (groups, individuals), and contexts (curriculum approaches)

Curriculum approaches

From the literature can be deduced four broad curriculum approach models: the Discipline Centred approach; the Broad Fields approach; the Community Centred approach; and the Individual or

Experienced Centred approach. Each of these approaches to curriculum theory and development and as a consequence of this to teaching, learning and research has its own set of defining attributes that makes them distinctive in the way they define and value teaching, learning, content focus, objectives, assessment, degrees of involvement in decisions and research. The following thumbnail sketches of two of the approaches will be helpful in clarifying these defining attributes

The discipline centred approach

This model has at its core the notion that knowledge organised by adults into discrete fields is the best way to organise the world's knowledge base. Within this model the long term goal of this approach is to attain depth and breadth in the discipline under study and to achieve general competency in living as a result of this by being able to apply the knowledge gained to solving life's problems. The short term curricular goal is to attain mastery of the facts and to apply the problem solving skills of the discipline to solving discipline based problems. Specialists control the knowledge base. Teaching and learning are planned according to a pre determined logical order of the discipline. teaching strategies may be employed in spiral curriculum formats etc but the outcome is the same, mastery of the logics of the discipline by the learner. Teachers and learners work with pre determined content with learners having little say in decision making regarding their learning. The assumptions underlying this approach to curriculum is encapsulated in the statement that the acquisition of knowledge and understanding for its own sake is the primary educational good. From this good flow all the other expectations from learning: general competency in living, enjoyment of self esteem, experience of social belonging, capacity to contribute to society. Finally under this approach the individual needs and interests of the learner will be met as a matter of course if there is adequate intellectual mastery of the discipline. Often within institutions especially those that do teaching, learning and research within the professions where there is a defined body of knowledge that needs to be mastered, this approach to knowledge generation and ways of examining and identifying truth is favoured.

The learner centred/experience approach

This model has as its conceptual base the notion that the best way to generate knowledge is through the lens of the learner. The long term goal of this design is to foster personal growth and to create environments in which learners participate in designing their own learning. The short term goal of this curriculum approach is to identify needs and interests of the learner and to design learning environments to cater to these needs. The emphasis is on cooperation with the learner so that they can identify and carry out there own program of learning. Content is determined by the individuals needs, interests, and stages of development and the scope of the content is only confined by the learner's world at any given time. The content will be expanded as the learners world expands. The continuity and sequencing of the program is done primarily through the interaction of the teacher, facilitator, tutor and the learner within his or her environment. The learner will express action, reflection, skills, talents and biography etc in adding to this continuity of experience. The curriculum priorities can therefore be expressed through consideration of the learner's needs, interests, abilities and through the learner's biography reflection, imagination and reasoning. From this it can be deduced that the educational focus of the curriculum is firmly embedded in the individual learner with the only limitation to expansion being based on the experiential and biological backgrounds of the learner. Thus the teacher, facilitator, tutor and the learner are the primary planning authority. There typically is no set content, with the content and means being chosen as desired. The teacher becomes the resource person. The institution if it exists at all becomes the collaborator with the widest possible audience to provide the knowledge base required. Thus the assumptions underlying this design (approach to curriculum development) is that the individual's development is the prime educational good and that general competency will flow from satisfying this demand. Knowledge and understanding have value only in so far as they assist the learner's personal development. It can be seen that this approach to knowledge generation, teaching and research could suit learning environments that do not have specific time dimensions, or prespecified knowledges to solve problems. The problem solving comes from within the individual learner's realm of experience.

The various statements and contents of the above two paragraphs will now be drawn upon as the content for analysing the mismatches that occur in debates within teaching, learning and research.

Keeping in mind that the above are descriptions of pure models that do not appear in the real world they never the less as models are useful for teasing out some of the apparent problems governments and Academe have with the various concepts when it comes to policy positions regarding teaching and research.

Exposing the mismatches

It is not so much whether there is an osmotic relationship between research, teaching and learning but whether these three contexts are firmly within a consistent conceptual framework prior to engaging in the research act that is the crucial consideration. If this is the case then the outcome of valid data collection, analysis and policy decisions will be much more defensible than if they are not within a consistent framework. If for example an institution is operating within a professional discipline based model of learning then to talk of research designs and their impact on individual needs and interests is to confuse the research issue. Specifically if one is to do research on tables one doesn't ask questions about swimming lessons. This basic validating concept that is to ask correct questions doesn't appear to happen when questions regarding teaching, learning and research are addressed. Once a question is raised concerning teaching and learning, the curriculum surrounds cannot be ignores for the curriculum approach sets the framework for the analysis of the problem.

The following example may clarify some of the issues involved. If as researchers we wish to ask questions about research, teaching and learning then one of the first exercises must be to clarify the curriculum approach being adopted for herein lies many of the implicit assumptions operating within the research teaching and learning environment. Philosophically the researcher needs to clarify any presuppositions that may be apparent in the environment (Degenhardt 1992: 11). If a discipline centred approach to the organisation of learning or research or teaching is being adopted then the appropriate questions to ask are concerning the discipline itself and whether the learner is learning the constructs of the discipline. From this construct flows the following: the professor /teacher /tutor /is the fountain of all research knowledge within the discipline, the learner needs to be inculcated into the discipline through a long apprenticeship usually at undergraduate or post graduate degree level. The learner's interests needs, biography are of little consequence unless it is directly related to the discipline. Assessments are in terms of the mastery of the concepts, principles and theories within the discipline which have to be absorbed and responded to. Thus an inappropriate research question would be: Are you enjoying learning within this framework? A more appropriate question would be how much do you know about the principles governing this aspect of the discipline? It follows that universities are societies' agents, through its professors of discipline, for the production and sanctioning of that knowledge which has value which is to be applied within the teaching and learning umbrella and hence the two functions (teaching/learning and research/learning) can be separated. This of course is to deny the proposition of teacher as researcher, researcher as teacher.

On the other hand if the learner or experience centred approach is adopted, the learner's personal development is the primary educational good. Knowledge and understanding have value only in so far as they contribute to personal development. Thus the learner becomes the centre of questions concerning research, teaching and learning. The inappropriate question to ask in this scenario would be; what discipline centred content did you master this week? One can see the variations on this theme often sprouted by governments. They often take the form in Australia of `a huge number of primary school students cannot read by age 7 (when a learner centred developmental approach has been adopted within the society). Another manifestation of this inappropriate questioning is the statement that the level of adult literacy is low in science or maths regardless of the need expressed by the adult population! Such populations may only want the mathematics that enable them to score the soccer pools! Thus within the framework expressed above the tutor becomes the facilitator when the time is appropriate, the knowledge base is drawn from the experiences of the learner. Tied to this is assessment which is done in collaboration with the learner. Research as a part of the functional relationship is carried out in collaboration between the researcher and the researched.

These two extreme model positions do not occur in the real world. Researchers can see how confusing it would be if one set of model parameters were in operation for example the discipline

centred approach and questions were asked to solve problems from within the other framework the learner centred approach. The questions would lead to inappropriate findings. Such assumptions concerning curriculum and the way we approach truth in our teaching learning and research are often implicit. The various models of teaching and learning within adult education need to be made explicit so that their assumptional bases can be subjected to scrutiny. Within the models answers can be found to the questions such as : does the tutor have a role? If so is it dependent on expert knowledge or facilitation? What about self directed and autonomous learning and the teacher role ?

In approaching the research / scholarship teaching question there is no singular appropriate proper focus for research. Each curriculum approach lends itself to a different and distinctive focus (Discipline, Broad fields, Community, Learner/experience centred). Each poses different questions about learning, teaching and research. Since each approach is underpinned with a value dimension there cannot be one correct answer or approach. These models of course are pure 'ideal-type' entities or scenarios for analysis as the real world is far too complex to consider as a single entity. To claim that there can be a separation of research and teaching is simply to claim a simplistic singular approach to curriculum development favouring one model, the discipline centred approach. This approach enables complex questions to be asked within a very narrow framework of a single discipline. Once questions are asked outside this framework then another dimension is added that cannot be dealt with adequately. For example the discipline centred approach cannot answer questions such as does the discipline add to the learners interest? The correct response is who cares! It can answer does the learner understand certain specified concepts concerning the discipline?

The real world of course is much more complex than this. If we examine two case studies of medical schools in Australia (for example at Sydney and Newcastle) it can be shown that the discipline centred approach of one is matched by the goal centred one of the other. Students have little or no say in the content selection its order or its presentation. In the other student groups work on setting themselves goals within a broad set of content systems and work on solving these problems collectively. Both sets of students graduate and are credentialled by the Medical governing bodies and evaluations of each learning environment suggests that both sets of students have elaborate knowledge backgrounds that enable them to be let lose on the Australian population. The discipline knowledge of one is the authority, the group-consensus the other. One has the professor as ultimate authority, the other has the facilitator. In one case the professor and the discipline dictates the learning curve in the other the group and the facilitator monitor the learning curve within a community framework. Both approaches obviously work as each institution's graduates can talk to each other in meaningful terms about the content learnt and the problem solving skills adopted.

However if governments or institutional bureaucrats decided to have these institutions carry out research within the framework of exclusively discipline centredness or individualised learning certain key curriculum issues concerning teaching, learning and research could not be answered appropriately. For example time taken to complete discrete units of work; assessment procedures; community knowledge; group decision making; individualised learning; practical skills (one institution introduces their trainees into the hospital/ community arena within the first years. It also lets students do practice on cadavers at student designated times. Any comparative research carried out thus on a range of program designs under the one research design would disadvantage one program at the expense of the other but regardless of this the validity of the research would need to be called into question. For example research on complex practice within the first year would show one institution's students as incompetent. If it was timed in the third year a different result would be possible and more valid conclusions reached.

The point to be stressed is that in the education and training field within adult education the curriculum approach adopted appears to effect the student outcomes hence any research to be carried out needs to add the curriculum dimension for valid results. Arguments for the separation of teaching and research appear to fit more easily within the discipline centred approach for it is here that the model sees the university professor as the key to knowledge development. The learner becomes under this model the apprentice and the teacher the application tool. Development of research findings and

their application through teaching sits easily within this paradigm. On the other hand only a portion of the adult education field sits within this paradigm. The models encompassing the Broad Fields approach, Community Centred approach and the Experiential Learner Needs approach cater to a vast array of adult learners who under these models view research as tied to cross disciplinary fields of study, community generated problems for study and experiential needs analysis where it becomes integral to teaching and learning and a necessary part of it.

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'The old bush school': Research, Teaching and Learning need *Management* to Make Connections in Adult Education.

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'Tis a queer old battered landmark that belongs to other years:
With the dog-leg fence around it, and its hat about its ears,
And the cow-bell in the gum tree, and the bucket and the stool,
There's a motley host of memories round that old bush school.
(John O'Brien: "The Old Bush School")

John O'Brien's poem 'The Old Bush School' portrays life in an Australian one-teacher rural school around 100 years ago. It depicts a public education which provided only the barest essentials. Life was tough for teacher and students. For both teaching and learning, resources were minimal. It was the teacher, the students and the stark desks and building, nothing else. The stress was on discipline and class control; there was no room for research or things academic. From this basic environment emerged the first adult education. By day the bush school was used to teach children; by night it was used to teach their parents. The day-time teacher was also the teacher of the adults at night. The classes focussed on literacy and numeracy.

Today the scene in adult education is vastly different, and the change has been brought about largely through the way in which adult education has been managed. Whenever adult education is discussed in the context of 'research, teaching and learning,' mention must be made of 'management.' All these four aspects must be linked.

This paper is prefaced by the picture of 'The Old Bush School' in order to illustrate the progress which has been made since the earliest days of adult education - progress made possible by the calibre of past and present day management. A case will here be made to justify the inclusion of 'management' with the concepts of 'research, teaching and learning,' with an account of some recent research conducted in Australia. This research gives an indication of the role of management in successful rural adult education agencies, and points the way for other agencies to become more successful in their operations. This in turn assists the teaching process and facilitates better learning for the students. This paper is concerned with the factor of successful management in adult education research.

If *Research, Teaching, Learning: Making Connections in the Education of Adults* be viewed as an equation, a case can be made that the equation lacks one vital component: 'Management.' In Australia it is the coordinator and management committee working in unison who enable research findings in adult education to be adapted to classroom teaching so that learning can function optimally. It is the coordinator and management committee who breathe life into research discoveries and put them to practical use.

Had there been no input from management, adult education would have made little progress since the days of the old bush school. Today, adult education agencies, through their coordinators and management committees, manage their resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Successful coordinators and management committees blend research results with teaching and learning and at the same time provide the necessary resources for the classroom teacher and students. Adult education proceeds more smoothly as a result. However, 'research', 'teaching' and 'learning' cannot stand alone as separate entities. It is impossible for the individual researcher, teacher or student acting alone to acquire the essential educational resources. Without the management function the whole adult educational process becomes severely restricted. I suggest our equation for this

conference should read: 'Research, *Management*, Teaching, Learning: Making Connections in Adult Education.'

When research findings are published they point to ways in which agency managements can make improvements in their field. It is then the task of the agency's management to coordinate resources for the ensuing teaching and learning processes.

The literature on the management of adult education agencies is poor. It is lacking when it comes to giving fine details about the roles of coordinators and management committees. The literature is non-existent when it comes to the review of agencies in a rural setting within Australia operating in a harsh economic environment. A rural setting and a harsh economic environment were the background to this present research.

The harsh economic background was caused by an economic recession combined with a crippling drought. Dwindling government funding to the rural agencies meant fewer course enrolments and this resulted in decreased agency income. Enrolments at one stage decreased by 26% in comparison to the same period the previous year. Management performances of the various agencies became very erratic.

The purpose of this descriptive study then was to identify and describe how coordinators and management committees successfully manage adult education agencies in rural New South Wales during periods of adverse conditions. This research problem raised three related questions:

1. What is the nature of the coordinator's administrative function in a successful adult education agency?

2. What is the nature of the management committee's administrative function in a successful adult education agency?

3. What is the working relationship between the coordinator and the management committee in the successful adult education agency?

The sample of four agencies was selected with the purpose of finding respondents in the agencies who were information-rich. These information-rich individuals served to shed light on issues of central importance to this study. The sample was selected with extremes in mind. At one extreme were two agencies who were deemed to be successful in their management. At the other extreme were two agencies deemed to be marginal or non successful in their management. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews.

A discussion of the findings on these three questions now follows.

1. What is the nature of the coordinator's administrative function in a successful adult education agency?

Six administrative functions of a coordinator emerged from this question; four of these involved leadership. These four indicated that in regard to leadership successful coordinators, contrasted with their non-successful counterparts:

- display more vigour and direction in their leadership qualities;
- display a more entrepreneurial spirit;
- have a more intuitive grasp of their field;
- are more people-oriented.

This aspect of the research indicates the importance of leadership in the coordinator's role, and confirms the comment by Courtenay (1990) that leadership of an agency is the most critical administrative function.

One quality a coordinator must possess is **leadership which incorporates vigour and direction**. Interviewees stated that not only did coordinators need to concentrate on such things as programme productivity and priority setting, and have an understanding of organisational and administrative behaviour, but also there must be attention given to the type of leadership needed to cope with the needs of an agency in a changing environment, with the bottom line focus on how best to accomplish those things which they felt were important. They also felt that a leader must be proactive, actively looking for problems to solve and opportunities to explore.

It would seem that the successful coordinator takes the role of coordinator almost to an extreme. One such coordinator was portrayed by a committee member in terms where it seemed, from the way her actions were described, that she owned the agency and was running it as her own private business. It seems appropriate at this point that a quote be used to describe succinctly the behaviour of the coordinator. These words were used to illustrate the coordinator's enthusiasm:

> She runs this place like it was her own. That is a very special skill for someone who is running an adult education agency, and I think that is why we are so successful - because Sue runs it like it is her own. I don't honestly believe that this agency or any other agency could get a better coordinator. I mean, Sue does far more than I would expect any coordinator to do.

With an image such as this in her agency she was able to generate a style of leadership which had such vigour and direction that it encouraged others to follow with enthusiasm.

Exploring a new opportunity then converting it into action brings with it a measure of risk - that is, it calls for an **entrepreneurial spirit**. Risk is part and parcel of entrepreneurship. However, in order to achieve agency goals, at times risks have to be taken. Successful coordinators have the capacity to judge accurately what is needed in the market place and then present the innovation in the form of a course. The risk is taken after thought is given to how it will be controlled.

Successful coordinators in this study confirmed the views of Van Fleet (1991) that entrepreneurs are managers who plan, organise, lead and control their organisations. The non-successful coordinators reported that they became less inclined to be entrepreneurial during harsh economic times because of the risk of failure. This finding is in line with the view of Harvey-Jones (1993), that a person's lack of talent forces them to react poorly during an economic recession. He contended that the less-good talent freezes into a state of inaction and a decision is made not to take any risks.

Intuition was another function which was revealed in this study. Intuition is a form of decision making. Decisions are made by coordinators on a daily, routine basis which have an element of uncertainty about them. Some of these decisions by the successful coordinators often defy logic and can be seen as being the result of intuition. Jackson (1993) describes this type of within the manager as a "gut feeling." There is an instinct within the coordinator that they can integrate ideas, situations and information then merge these into courses which satisfy student needs. Success seems to follow naturally. This study revealed that successful coordinators possessed this intuitive grasp of their field and, as Robbins (1994) explained, these coordinators quickly see beyond the surface appearance of things and dig into the underlying meaning and essence of a situation to make positive decisions.

The successful coordinator must be **people-oriented**. The successful coordinator must be able to listen to others, be friendly and approachable, help others and show concern for those who are in need, and possess a high level of interpersonal skills. All these characteristics were used to describe this study's successful coordinators. All four coordinators recognised the need to be people-oriented. However, the non-successful coordinators rated this skill lower than the successful coordinators, who believed that people skills were the most important. Adult education is a pursuit which is involved

with people; indeed, Luthans (1988) claims that the effective manager devotes eighty-one percent of available time to human-oriented activities. To be successful in an endeavour such as adult education the coordinator must be a "people person".

Another administrative function of the successful coordinator revealed in this study was that of **communication**. In order to be successful the coordinator must exhibit a high level of communication skills. Ability as a communicator assists the coordinator to establish a network of contacts and this enables the required information to flow. The network created through communication skills enables the coordinator to develop a relationship with current and potential students which eventually leads to larger class sizes and success for the agency. Robbins (1994) reported that communication absorbed forty-four percent of the effective manager's time. Luthans (1988) outlined the communication process as exchanging routine information and processing paperwork, conveying the results of meetings, reading and writing reports, routine financial reporting and book-keeping and general desk work. This study showed that all of these factors formed part of the routine of the successful coordinator, who used a high level of communication skills to acquire information through personal contact with other adult educators.

Finally, the successful coordinator must possess some degree of **financial, economic and staffing management skills.** The concept of these skills is embraced by Knox's (1979) category of "Acquisition and allocation of resources." This study revealed that the successful coordinator needs all the skills outlined by authors such as Dahl (1980), Miller (1987) and Shipp (1982). Shipp in particular states the need for coordinators to have sound financial management skills in order that agencies remain viable and this study bore that out. In New South Wales, in the relatively short period of about twenty years, adult education has moved from a schools base, with the schoolteacher supervising a narrow curriculum and collecting small sums of money, to today's agencies, usually situated in their own buildings, presenting a much broader curriculum, and demanding extremely finance-conscious coordinators in order to achieve their objectives. Successful coordinators today are handling budgets involving millions of dollars. This is a far cry from the situation which prevailed a few short years ago and indicates the need for a multi-skilled coordinator to head up today's agency.

2. What is the nature of the management committee's administrative function in a successful adult education agency.

The management committee's administration in this study consisted of three different functions. The first was that the management committee must have a chairperson with **strong leadership qualities**. Committee members, when they respected the leadership qualities of their chairperson, were able to blend together as a team and make decisions with confidence. Committee members in the successful agencies recognised the value of a strong chairperson for the good conduct of their agency whilst, at the same time, the presidents were very much aware of the need to build on committee enthusiasm and maintain a flow of effective decisions. Knowles (1980) saw the effectiveness of a committee being dependent upon the leadership provided by the president. This is seconded by Kowalski (1988) who asserted that the success of a committee relied upon clear definitions of role, functions, and responsibilities being understood by all concerned. One president remarked that he endeavoured to provide a leadership which encouraged the committee to be pro-active and give them all a smell of success. This success theme was discussed by McLoughlin (1986) when he examined non-profit, public sector organisations which provide "human services". He claimed that successful non-profit organisations are successful because they have successful persons at the helm. He added that an organisation of this type will be great only if it can get a "great individual" to lead it. This study showed that effective chairs possess the leadership qualities which, when on display at agency meetings, not only encourages members to voice their opinions in the decision-making process but also presents the meetings with information and new opportunities.

The presidents, in providing leadership for their committees in a progressive manner, cannot act alone. The second administrative function of the president and the committee is **actively to recruit new members by 'head-hunting.'** For a committee to operate effectively Cornwall and Perlman (1990) claim that there needs to be a form of support, co-operation and entrepreneurial thinking from

colleagues at the committee level. One possible way of getting a committee to operate more effectively along these lines is for the president and/or coordinator to use their influence to get the committee to headhunt new members (as outlined by George: 1987) and then nominate them for selection to fill vacancies on the committee when they occur rather than leave the selection process to the "old boys" network. The successful management committees in this study actively pursued people who possessed specific skills and then pressed them to join the committee. The most frequently headhunted person possessed financial skills such as accounting.

The third function of the management committee was to **seek innovation and development** for their agency rather than hope for survival through crisis management. Operating in the harsh environment in which the agencies had found themselves had caused vastly different reactions in their management styles. The successful agencies generated new courses which had the effect of creating additional income. In one agency an innovation saw the development of three new sub-committees whose role it was to channel information and ideas into the general committee. This is an example of an organisation adapting to a changing environment. Adaptation to the environment by organisations was defined by Barney and Griffin (1992) as "anticipating and adjusting to the impact that the environment is likely to have on their economic performance." Additionally, Moorhead and Griffin (1992) noted that "to adapt successfully, a social system must be aware of its environment, understand how that environment is changing, and make the appropriate adjustments." This means that for organisations such as adult education agencies to remain viable they must adapt to changes in their environment and involve themselves in some type of renewal.

When committees fail to make adjustments in their approach to their business there is always the distinct possibility that problems will arise. One such problem concerns the way in which management committees approach perceived difficulties. The lack of committee adjustment to difficulties and a failure to innovate and take appropriate measures can suddenly plunge a committee into what might be called 'survival mode' and crisis management. A non-successful agency in which several interviewees had expressed the opinion that their committee had been in crisis mode during this period held committee meetings which spanned one hour. It is difficult to imagine how an agency trying to survive a crisis can conduct its business effectively with meetings which only last an hour.

3. What is the working relationship between the coordinator and the management committee in the successful adult education agency?

This question revealed two administrative requirements. First, there is an **effective partnership between coordinator and management committee** in the form of trust, cooperation and teamwork. Successful agencies rely on the coordinator and committee working together as partners. In order to achieve agency goals there must be a spirit of teamwork and support for each other. If there is any other type of relationship then as Wolf (1990) states, there is a strained "we/they" atmosphere permeating the internal operations of the organisation. In this situation Wolf claims that the authority of the coordinator is undermined and coordinators are not in a position to reprimand committee members who are out of line and so they rely on the chair to do so.

There is a separation of roles in adult education agencies. Management committees are responsible for the focus on policies, plans and objectives. The president needs leadership skills to help the committee achieve its objectives. Working hand in glove with the committee is the coordinator who is responsible for stimulating, facilitating, guiding and assessing change efforts. All of this is done by the coordinator through what White and Belt (1980) see as a leadership provided by planning, organising and evaluating. This study showed that the successful management committees provide the power to the coordinator to carry out their objectives and strategies and at the same time provides resources so that the coordinator can achieve those goals. For all of this there needs to be high mutual trust between both parties.

The second administrative requirement is a **parity of esteem between committee and coordinator** rather than passive subordination. Coordinators are hired by the committee and must report to them. Wolf (1990) notes the relationship between committee and coordinator and outlines several scenarios which have been known to create problems with the working relationship between the two parties. In this study there did not appear to be any difficulties with the working relationship between coordinator and management committee in the successful agencies. Both parties were of the opinion that they had a working relationship which was based on trust, cooperation and teamwork. This type of relationship enabled them to achieve the goals of the agency.

An overall feature of the findings in this study was the importance of leadership. Leadership plays a vital role in an agency being successful. When the coordinator possesses leadership qualities imbued with vigour and direction, and works in unison with a president who has a leadership style which induces confidence from the committee, then the agency has a firm basis for success. These factors, together with a coordinator and management committee who afford each other equal status and esteem, are the essential requirements of a successful adult education agency. For all of these reasons, *management* must be included as an integral factor in our *'research, teaching, learning'* equation.

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Re-Searching adult education practice: paradoxes and possibilities

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National training reform in Australia has worked, not only to reorient the nature of adult and vocational education and training and prescribe its mode of provision, but also to redefine the purposes of adult education. While one of the results of reform has been to draw attention to the role of education and training, it has narrowed the space for critical educational practice and research. In this paper, I will provide a snapshot of the way in which the connections between teaching, learning and research are experienced within particular adult education settings in Victoria, Australia. I will report on personal conversations with ten highly experienced adult educators, describing how the current policy environment mediates their teaching practices. My 'reading' of their dialogue identifies shifts in teaching practices and the organisation of their work as competency-based training has been nationally endorsed as the mode of teaching. These effects have been experienced as simultaneously powerful and powerless, highlighting the complexity of the discourse and discipline of competency.

Contextualising the research

The educational policy era from the late 1980s has been described as 'a symbiosis between human capital theory and arguments for market reform of education' (Marginson 1993:50). The consequences of economic rationalism has been to support a national focus on vocational education, insofar as it contributes to national skill formation. This has privileged work-related education and training outcomes in favour of general educational development. The education and training system has been opened up to competition, through the simulation of a market system (Anderson 1997). Private educational providers have proliferated and the profile of teaching and administration workforces in both public and private educational enterprises sectors has shifted towards contractualism.

This research project was based on ten adult educators, (8 women and 2 men) each with extensive experience in adult and vocational education and training, who were asked to engage with a range of perspectives on the changing nature of their work, its relationship to training reform and to evaluate their educational purposes and practices, as they have been influenced and altered by training reform. These educators were based in different adult education settings in Victoria – large TAFE Institutes in which vocational education and training makes up most of the provision; smaller community-based settings in which a wider and smaller range of general, access and vocational programs are delivered; and labour market programs which offer vocational programs to return the long term unemployed to work. The question underlying this research was to what extent and how had the process of training reform in Australia affected the way in which adult educators conceptualise and undertake their teaching.

From Purpose to Process

These educators spoke broadly and holistically of adult education. All talked of its purposes insofar as it developed the whole person – their personal fulfillment, their self-esteem and confidence and their intellectual development that instilled a broader awareness. What guided their practices was the belief in education as contributing to:

> ...the growth of the total person (Informant 6)
> open[ing] the mind (Informant 10)
> [expanding] ...people's understanding of the world around them and what the structures... mean, ... how people make meaning of their world (Informant 4)
> ... for its intellectual development (Informant 6)

> opening the mind, introducing new concepts, getting people to look critically at their experiences... (Informant 10)

While working with learners to 'expose and expand their minds', a few educators recognised that participation in adult teaching did at the same time contribute to the development of a skilled and productive workforce:

> ... by providing and developing [an] educated community, we are also providing a good base for people to develop the skills that they need... in the workforce... (Informant 6).

Lifelong learning was understood as contributing to individual, social, and economic development. At the same time, however, tension emerged for most educators around what they perceive as the imposition of the goal of national skill formation on liberal adult education ideals. This has resulted in a policy (and resourcing) emphasis on vocational education and training in which, the educators feel, the social and individual contribution made by general adult education has become increasingly negated.

At first glance, it is the existence of general and vocational education as polarities, in which the vocational dominates the general, that characterise the responses of educators. However, when delving more deeply into the distinguishing features of general and vocational education, as described by the educators, it becomes clear that in most instances, general education is represented by terms such as the 'social', 'personal' or 'softer' skills that emerge in the learning process. It is the latter which the educators describe as '...increasingly being lost sight of' (Informant 10) or 'often overlooked' (Informant 9). Nine out of ten educators concluded that the effect of this was to limit and narrow teaching practice:

> I would love to have some studies done to see if students leave with as fleshed out an English ability as they used to have... it has narrowed their skill base and all the teachers here agree with that (Informant 1).
> It is much more narrowly focussed... because you are tending to look at specific areas... not looking at the overall way it's done... (Informant 7).

Collins (1991) warns of the lack of significance in the artificial distinction drawn by some educators between education and training, who in so doing '...[distance] themselves from complicity in the consequences of excessive emphasis on skills acquisition' (Collins 1991:66). The increased significance lies in the extent to which a broader concept of learning becomes subsumed by a narrower method of teaching and learning associated with competency-based training. Counterposed by these educators, then, are not two distinct educational orientations that may be differentiated by their purposes, that is, general and vocational education and training. Instead, it is the pedagogical model of competency-based training that generates resistance among educators, who favour a mode of learning, that they believe, is more conducive to the incorporation of a broader range of skills than is presently achievable.

Competencies have become the benchmark to which substantial forms of general and vocational education provision, besides that which is within the boundaries of the higher education sector, should and does adhere. By implication then, for most informants, resistance in these adult education settings has come to be represented and dominated by the model of learning and assessment it endorses, rather than by the nature of the knowledge adult and vocational education incorporates. Thus, it has become the nature of adult *learning*, (*how* we learn), rather than the nature of adult *education (what we learn)*, that characterises teaching and learning practices, initiated and reinforced by national policy shifts experienced in adult education over the last decade. Debates ensue around the nature of effective learning rather than the nature of education. While worthwhile consideration and useful debate is needed around learning, its prevalence diverts attention from the social, economic and political contexts in which the causes and effects of training reform are located.

Regulation and professionalisation

Competency-based training has become the feature that evokes an immediate and shared meaning of national training reform. It has come to represent the reorganisation of teachers' work and teaching practices that has been experienced with the advent of training reform. It is through unpacking the educators' multiple responses on the efficacy of competency-based training that their comments on this reorganisation become evident.

They describe its effects as imposing:

> ...pressure to get through these competencies (Informant 1)
> ... a structure and ...changing what is happening in the classroom (Informant 4).
> this amazing paranoia about assessment, getting [it] right, ...over assessing, they've [educators] lost confidence (Informant 2).

Eloquently, the educators mourn for lost teaching traditions and cultures:

> ...we have lost the opportunity to be able to teach to the students, with the students and alongside them, they've taken us [educators] out of that and put us in a different place (Informant 4).

> ...it does [not allow us to] bring in life experience, past experience, individual views or values... (Informant 2).
> [it] ...does not allow freedom to go sideways or take a natural learning tangent to the left or right... (Informant 4).

Now, it is at this point that a stark paradox emerges. Within an environment in which, for most educators, a symbolic and real shift in the organisation of their work and teaching practices is felt (typified by a sense of reduction in flexibility and control), a positive image of an increasing professionalised field of adult education emerges simultaneously from the data.

They have identified professionalism in five ways:

Firstly, the prescriptive nature of curricula is seen to enforce professional educational practice among educators, as all are now compelled to incorporate a more balanced spread of content than was previously evident. The prescriptive nature of curricula is seen to offer '...a comfortable yardstick that we did not have before' (Informant 8).

Secondly, the emphasis on outcomes which lies at the core of CBT means there are '...all these outside bodies to whom we have to be accountable...' (Informant 1). Accountability yields professionalism!

Thirdly, the increasing attention paid by government and industry to the role of education, has enhanced the visibility of education, as organisational partnerships have been forged with industry on the basis of the common language of competence.

Fourthly, the consequent visibility of education and training has focussed attention on the need for ongoing professional development of educators, as governments and educational enterprises rely on 'quality teaching' to maintain and attract income (private and public).

And fifthly, there exist a number of licensing arrangements with which education providers must comply in order to run accredited programs. These relate to the organisational and teaching standards which must be continually monitored to ensure ongoing receipt of public funds.

However, when analysing the five reasons generated as evidence for the growing professionalism of the field, it becomes apparent that this evidence may be similarly construed as the basis for deprofessionalisation:

- Prescriptive curriculum documents may be seen as substituting for the professional judgement of the educator and imposing a specific teaching focus.

- The existence of external bodies to whom educators are accountable may be viewed as undermining the professional judgement of the teaching profession.

- The enhanced visibility of education and training has been on the basis of its (alleged) contribution to economic efficiency rather than valuing learning in its own right.

- Attention has, indeed, been paid to the value of ongoing professional education. For many educators, however, choices for participation in professional development have been restricted to management training and/ or information workshops outlining training reform in general and competency-based learning in particular.

- Finally, licensing arrangements for vocational curricula work to sanction industry-relevant knowledge, over other knowledges, facilitating the reproduction of a system which serves the primary interests of those other than learner and educator.

What becomes apparent is that control over teaching has been removed from the 'cut and thrust' of the learning environment and reoriented externally, in the form of organisations or texts to which adult educators are accountable. This displacement reflects a predilection with instrumentalism and technique as the basis of teaching practice and a shift in the reference point of the basis of valid knowledge towards the workplace (see Jackson 1993, 1995). CBT and its associated curriculum documents act as officially warranted texts, organising the production and controlling the reproduction of knowledge. Such knowledge then makes 'true' and universal that which represents a perspective that is often mono-cultural, mono-lingual, driven by free market values and its relevance to the workplace.

Interestingly, such regulation has been won not through coercion but through consent. This is clearly demonstrated by the educators recounting simultaneous accounts of regulation in the sphere of their workplaces and increased recognition of their profession. Experiences of a growing administrative workload required to maintain the system alongside heavy teaching loads and changes in relationships between colleagues are common (for example see Robinson 1993, Kell 1997, Smith 1997). These changes are necessary to make the contribution of the profession explicit and accountable.

It is precisely the manner in which this discourse has harnessed such concepts as 'empowerment' and 'autonomy' from liberal humanism that has lent support to its entrenchment (see Edwards and Usher 1994). Competency-based training has worked to facilitate the removal of subjectivity of educator and learner from the learning process and substituted, instead, seemingly neutral standards on which to base decontextualised and disembodied knowledge. What is significant is that the extent of regulation and control is simultaneously experienced as a sense of increased power, experienced as professionalisation.

Collins (1991) connects the issue of professionalisation with a 'cult of efficiency', as the field seeks out legitimation and assurance of competence from 'licensure, certification, standardised minimum criteria for preparatory training, continuing professional education (mandatory and otherwise), and the other trappings of modern professions' (Collins 1991:14). Within an environment where the organisation of teaching and learning is fundamentally reorganised, the role of teachers become that of a "'support function', as a facilitator subordinated to institutional goals and objectives which are determined by others and implemented through measures intended to organise their practice"

(Jackson 1993:111). It is at this point that these educators' perceptions of their teaching role provide a perspective of the basis of their professionalism.

Wilson (1993), Collins (1991) and Griffin (1989) identify that the growing tendency towards greater professionalisation of adult education reflects a preoccupation with method rather than purpose. It is this very characteristic of the field that emerges strongly in the data, as educators identify technicist rather than purposive conceptions of their practice.

The facilitation fetish

In identifying the core aspect of their role as educators, eight out of ten educators explicitly identified themselves as facilitators. For most informants, facilitation embraced the key aspects incorporated and expected of the adult educator in order to perform her role. These were the ability to develop a conducive learning climate, to act as resource to the self-directed learner and to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of their subject area. Expertise in demonstrating competence in these three areas fulfilled the responsibilities of professional adult education practice. The facilitator therefore *was* the professional adult educator!

The place for explicit educational and political values to underpin professional practice was secondary or absent.

> Good facilitators will be really objective... (Informant 2).
>
> [It] is a distinct no-no for a trainer to influence people or to overlay her political perspective (Informant 3).

The policy-practice dynamic within adult education in the 1990s in Australia has established an environment which has reinforced the displacement of the educator. This has worked to diminish her identity and remove her autonomy as the basis for professional judgement. The professional adult educator works as a facilitator - an identity who may objectively resource learners, slipping in and out of the learning environment.

An emphasis on teaching and learning has shifted towards markets and clients. Teaching and learning is a service that workplace consultants (formerly known as teachers) sell as a means to upskill or reskill. The motivation for re-searching traditions, assumptions and practices which mediate the teaching and learning moment has to compete with pressing needs for researching market intelligence.

The organisational cultures, within which teaching and learning is at the core, perceive and construct a great divide between 'pure' (academic research) and 'applied research'. The research on teaching and learning that is organisationally and systemically sanctioned is frequently framed by current policy and resourcing exigencies. Researching beyond these paradigms is often left to individual teachers, whose findings are, in most cases, untied to organisational and system development.

Critical possibilities

In the quest for outcomes and accountability, dialogue around teaching and learning has been drawn towards a focus on the process of learning (how we work) rather than the content of learning. As such, the opportunities to highlight issues of power, politics, class, race, gender in and outside of the learning environment are theoretically lost. The policy-practice nexus portrays a learning environment disconnected, depoliticised and deproblematised. It is here that traditional assumptions about teaching adults, supported by powerful discourses within adult education scholarship, connect with and reinforce a depoliticised and deproblematised learning environment.

Adult education theories grounded in liberal humanist traditions have left the role and positioning of the educator untouched, placing her in a powerful but decontextualised space. It is the dominance of the universal, unitary, rational and fixed subject that feminist and poststructuralist theorists have

attempted to overturn, so as to address difference and claim space for the personal as they have challenged the universal (for example Lather 1994; Smith 1983). In contrast to the unitary construction of the role of the adult educator, the educator is called upon to examine, locate, name and acknowledge her values. And this calls for grounding our work 'in the world we live in as well as the theories we use... [and] how they rebound on each other' (Bannerji et al. 1992:6).

Insofar as the notion of facilitator avoids consideration of power, creating the illusion of common ground between learner and educator, it obscures the reality in which we, as educator, comply with and are part of the process in creating and maintaining privilege. Student-centred practice must necessarily be replaced by *centred-practice* in which experience is the starting point, not the end, of teaching, learning and research. Such practice then provides an opportunity to reinsert professional judgement into teaching and so reclaim a place for the educator. The prescription of teaching content no longer dominates the learning environment as it is surrounded, scrutinised and subject to particular and personal experience and knowledge. Teaching then, does not support workplace knowledge but rather, problematises it, insofar as it conforms to or contests local experiences.

Beginning from everyday experience is methodologically important, in that it provides 'a place to begin an inquiry, and a place to return to, to demonstrate its usefulness.' (Campbell & Manicom 1995:7). The implications of this analysis for researchers, for example, is that work must *begin* within the everyday world, as subjects are centred in and experience it, in order to disclose the social relations which construct them and their relation to the abstract conceptual world. Its conceptual importance for education is that it provides opportunities for learners to connect their lives as a means to reflect on ruling and abstract practices. As a means of critical practice, this complexity imposes on the educator the imperative to connect both her and learners' local knowledge to that which is produced outside individual experience.

> There is no better point of entry into a critique or reflection than one's own experience. It is not the end point, but the beginning of an exploration between the personal and the social and therefore the political. And this connection process, which is also a discovery, *is* the real pedagogic process... (Bannerji et al. 1992: 67).

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Developing critical literacy in the context of democratic renewal in Scotland

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Introduction

This paper is concerned with the cultural politics of adult literacy practice and its implications for developing critical literacy. Essential to our concern is the problematisation of literacy as an uncontested good. Instead, we argue that what constitutes literacy has to become a reflexive part of what is taught rather than what is assumed. This step can provide a way of validating subordinate cultures whilst providing opportunities for adult students to stretch their critical faculties and at the same time acquire skills in the dominant literacy. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for adult literacy to develop a curriculum based on a more genuine dialogue between tutors and students. For this to occur dominant assumptions informing literacy practice need to be opened up and challenged. We argue that the current context of democratic renewal in Scotland is an opportune time for literacy practice to refocus itself towards a broader and more critical curriculum.

Ideologies of literacy

'Whilst literacy is an emotive word that evokes almost universal agreement about its desirability' as Hamilton (1996, 148-9) points out, there is, nevertheless, considerable divergence about its definition and purpose. Hamilton identifies three competing ideologies of literacy:

1. Literacy as cultural missionary activity: literacy education is understood as a welfare activity promoted by the middle classes for disadvantaged others. A variant of this has been dominant in the 1990s through the linking of illiteracy with unemployment, anti-social and criminal behaviour by young people.
2. Literacy for social control: literacy is linked with maintaining the status quo by shaping responsible, moral and economically productive citizens. During the 1980s and 1990s literacy was strongly associated with a wider discourse about national training, economic needs and functional competencies.
3 Literacy for emancipation: this ideology involves a radical critique of elite culture, state controlled curricula and unequal power relations between groups. This emancipatory discourse has always been marginal and its success sparsely documented.

What constitutes literacy in any society, therefore, reflects the selective tradition of the dominant social groups. However, a powerful mode of control is to present the existing state of affairs as timeless and unchanging - a natural order of things. This process involves abstracting literacy from its social context and representing it as a set of technical skills to be acquired. We want to argue the opposite. The social construction of literacy needs to be reflexively constituted in the curriculum. By problematising what literacy is, the process of learning it can become a more critical enterprise. Furthermore, relativising the dominant form of literacy reinforces the legitimacy of other, subordinate, literacies. It may also help to shift the curriculum so it can be shaped by the interests and experiences of the participants. What this entails is a view of literacy as part of a critical curriculum which helps people to take greater collective control over their lives.

The cultural politics of 'language-dialect'

Culture and language are embedded in each other and in relations of power. Powerful cultures are in competition with subordinate ones - in Scotland this struggle has been echoed in the status of Scots as a dialect or a language. This debate is an important socio-linguistic issue but, at the same time, its outcome is also a signal of the balance of cultural forces which are in struggle. Dominant ideas about the 'right' or 'correct' way to speak and (as a consequence) to write constitute a 'regime of truth' (see

Foucault, 1985) in which variations are 'other'; denigrated and devalued as dialects which deviate from the normal or standard pattern.

The wider cultural politics of class and nation are noticeable by their absence in literacy practice in Scotland. Adult literacy has tended to be blinkered to the realities of the complex social formation of which it is part - and in part reproducing. It tends to treat literacy as an uncontested good and fails to locate literacy in the process of cultural politics with all its ramifications. For instance, the cultural politics of language marginalises the patterns of speech of subordinate groups. This sets the terms in which literacy is defined and involves a process of homogenisation. Varied and subordinate literacies are fossilised or rendered invisible. But it is never simply a given way of speaking that is stigmatised, rather, the entire way of life and the integral identities associated with it. To accept the standard 'language-dialect' as the necessary condition for advancement means that being assimilated into the dominant culture involves the rejection of both the language and 'the way of being of those who speak the non-standard variety. To succeed therefore entails a rejection of ones own language, family, and community. [thus serving] to reinforce further the cultural politics of domination and subordination'.(Lankshear et al, 1997:38).

The advantages created for specific social groups of having their language legitimated by educational institutions has been well documented (Bernstein, 1971). Moreover, dominant groups are able to establish their knowledge priorities, learning styles, pedagogical preferences, notions of important and useful knowledge, their ways of representing truth, their ways of arguing and establishing correctness, and their logics, grammars and language as the institutional norms. The real challenge to literacy practice is to find ways of valuing the vernacular language and literacies of subordinate groups whilst not disadvantaging them. We have to recognise that there are different literacies which are 'configurations of practices that serve different purposes' (Barton 1995, 39). Moreover, these literacies are not equally valued. 'Dominant literacies originate from the dominant institutions of society. Vernacular literacies have their roots in everyday life'. If the richness of indigenous languages go unacknowledged then their culture is distorted in a way that disguises its social and ideological character through processes that are represented as politically neutral. Literacy thus contributes to the construction of a particular kind of citizen, a particular kind of identity and a particular conception of the nation through the privileging of one form of spoken and written communication (Street and Street, 1991).

Democratic renewal in the new Scotland

The contradictions of the current context has opened up opportunities for developing a more critical approach to literacy practice in Scotland. Democratic renewal has been an outcome of a changing relationship between the cultural politics of civil society and the political culture of the state (see Martin, 1998). The demands for a new democratic order arose in civil society and has had repercussions in terms of the development of a form of self-governance. In the Referendum held in September 1997 the 'settled will' of the electorate was overwhelming in its support for a Scottish parliament. Scotland will have its own devolved parliament in the year 2000. This changing relationship between the state and civil society has benefited from a wider process of cultural renewal.The constitutional changes underway reflect a distinctive moment in Scottish history. In our view there are unheralded opportunities for a critical adult literacy practice to contribute to and benefit from this process.

In reconfiguring the state and civil society there are dangers in absolutist forms of political and cultural nationalism which deny difference. Nationality has been central to the cultural politics of difference between Scotland and England - particularly in this century. One outcome of this has been an assertion of Scottish identity with the kitsch of the kailyard, Rob Roy, tartan and heather - a mythological cultural heritage which has resonated with narrow forms of nationalist politics. Whilst this asserts a difference to English culture it also asserts 'sameness'; it represents only one version of Scottishness. What it has generated is a polarised debate between pro-and-anti Scots language / literacy teaching (see Ferri, 1996; McClure, 1997). The former denies the importance of difference and the latter assumes it unproblematically. We have difficulty with these positions on three accounts.

First, to ignore the importance of vernacular language devalues an important aspect of people's cultural capital which is the educational equivalent of 'asset stripping'. Second, assumptions made about Scottish identity tend to ignore its complex and contingent nature. Our identities are not immutable and can vary in relation to different structural positions and social contexts. Third, this also ignores the diversity of Scottish culture for example, by marginalising the linguistic and cultural diversity of Scotland's ethnic minority communities. Historically, the process of denying difference has been accompanied by an ideology of assimilation in which the rights of these groups to express their own culture and maintain their own traditions has been delegitimated by an assertive appeal to Britishness.

There are signs, however, of a revitalised civic politics and cultural life which reflects a more diverse social base. This new context creates an opportunity to rethink key assumptions which inform current practice in basic education in Scotland. The impetus for re-examining cultural identities may be ideal conditions for critically appropriating the dominant literacy. The 'cultural movement' can contribute to the type of identity people want to construct for their future. William Morris has called this the 'education of desire' and one aspect of this development may come from the recognition and confidence of a new tradition of Scottish novelists, poets, play-writers and film-makers who reject, and actively resist, the dominant language and literary traditions of the metropolis. Other ways in which people have been helped to think about their identities differently has been through the movement to reclaim Scottish working class history and the everyday experiences of ordinary people. New social movements such as Women's Groups have been particularly active in reclaiming their own stories (see Henderson and Mackay, 1990) and have developed a resource for women to think and desire differently by expanding the horizons of the possible. The new cultural space which the process of democratic renewal signals provides the opportunity to recognise and validate indigenous literacy forms.

Implications for building a critical curriculum

The dominant emphasis on literacy as culturally neutral undersells its contribution to encouraging critical thinking and social action. We understand critical thinking to include the ability to go beyond the surface of experience and its representations in order to identify social interests - and where necessary, to act on them. There are at least four aspects for the development of a critical curriculum - implicit in the analysis - which need to be considered further.

First, we need to develop an approach to literacy which positions people in a way which enables them to appropriate the dominant language critically - and in a way which valorises the indigenous culture without discarding what is useful in the dominant one (Allman and Mayo, 1997). The social construction of literacy should become part of the literacy curriculum. There is a parallel in our argument with the more widespread practice of adult literacy students 'learning to learn'. The basis of this development was that to equalise the power relations between tutor and student both parties needed to be familiar with the psychology of adult learning. Inducting both in the process of learning to learn, it was argued, would facilitate dialogue over how the curriculum was organised.

We are arguing a similar case to be reflexive about the literacy learnt. What is different is that, currently, neither tutors nor students are encouraged to problematise the nature of literacy itself. The assumptions which underpin what it means to be literate are reflected in a diluted (functional) version of adult literacy practice. Yet the socially constructed nature of literacy could be made open and explicit - making comparisons with the literacies reflected in the indigenous cultural movement would help its achievement. This would involve relativising the dominant literacy whilst at the same time revealing its social roots. Moreover, the vernacular literacies of people could become a resource for making visible the cultural politics of literacy practice whilst providing an opportunity for them to be legitimated as a cultural asset rather than liability. In this process, the resources both tutors and students bring to the curriculum could be more evenly balanced and provide a basis for genuine dialogue. Instead of assuming literacy to be unproblematic, a reflexive practice would reveal its social construction and the consequences of this, exploring why it differs from people's everyday literacies and 'mother tongue'.

By taking a reflexive approach the opportunity exists to make explicit the hoops people have to jump through in order to be judged competent. We are not arguing that people should be denied access to dominant literacies or that their own vernacular literacy is somehow privileged. The cultural politics of institutions, and the literacy they reinforce, have to be made visible to show that they represent a selection from a wider range of possibilities - none of which are neutral. These practices then become a critical resource for learning and literacy.

Second, literacy is deeply and inescapably bound up with producing, reproducing and maintaining unequal arrangements of power. The meanings that are given and received in texts are not innocent. They are ideological. Developing critical readers and writers has, then, to be about enabling them to detect and handle the inherently ideological dimension of literacy, and the role of literacy in the enactment and production of power.(See Lankshear et al 1997) Macrae (1997) has documented ways in which reading texts critically has been developed by tutors in their practice in one part of Scotland. Another way this has been encouraged in the past has been through the growth of student publishing. The role of adult literacy students as producers rather than consumers of texts not only 'empowers' authors and demystifies the authority of the text it also creates the possibility for diverse experiences and understandings to circulate and become a resource for the curriculum. However, there is no equivalent in Scotland to the publishing activities of adult literacy students at Peckham in London or Gatehouse in Manchester. One consequence of democratic renewal might be a greater interest in producing student writing.

Third, the breadth of curriculum opportunities has to be extended to provide a stimulating and intellectually demanding experience which will enable students to stretch their critical faculties. In these ideologically and materially 'mean times' the only encouragement for expanding literacy has been tied to narrow forms of vocationalism. Developing critical literacy in this context has been an act of resistance at the margins of a marginal service. Yet there is a rich educational philosophy that was once dominant in Scottish education that argued that the encouragement of a 'democratic intellect' was seen to be essential to the wider functioning of a democratic society (see Macdonald, 1998). A democratic society is one in which the experts and specialists have to be scrutinised by the wider community. We see no reason why, with a bit of imagination and resources, this tradition could not apply in basic education too. We are aware of one literacy project were the provision offered to students involves an unusual breadth by encompassing subjects like philosophy, democracy, anti racism, amongst other things, and seeks explicitly to develop the critical faculties of students (see Hayward et al 1995). Undoubtedly there are more and we are currently investigating the range of activities which can be identified as critical literacy in Scotland. However, the early indication is that such work is scarce.

Fourth, the least developed aspect of critical literacy practice is that which involves the link between education and action. Instead of forging the two, basic education often undermines it. The key issue here is the way the learner is socially constructed. With one or two exceptions the vast majority of literacy practice is grounded in a view of the student as an individual rather than as a member of a social group. That such a construction is ideologically laden is seldom made explicit. The implicit assumption that we are independent of others - and not interdependent with them - is reinforced by claims of an individual, needs meeting curriculum.

Focussing on the needs of the individual obscures as much as it reveals. What it hides is that we are individual men or women, members of a social class and ethnic group, able bodied or not, with different sexualities. In other words our experiences are shaped by the social context of which we are part rather than some over-riding abstract individualism. Our common position with others generates the possibility of joint interests which can become the basis of collective action. In a sense the last thing we are is an individual. Despite this, the ideology of individualism (see Keddie, 1980) is rife in education and adult literacy practice in particular. One consequence has been the failure to build a curriculum which addresses the collective nature of students' experiences. Without taking this step it is difficult to move on to engage literacy work with local community or wider forms of social action.

The apocryphal example is the student who has a real life problem which they want to deal with - for instance they may be a tenant living in damp, sub-standard, housing - but instead of this concern entering into the curriculum as a resource for analysing how it might be addressed, and by whom, it unthinkingly gets turned into a letter writing exercise and is displayed as an example of student-centred learning! The substantive issue (how to successfully challenge the provider of the damp housing) is lost behind an emphasis on the skill of letter writing. The implicit assumption that writing a letter is the appropriate response, perhaps as opposed to collectively organising, is never on the curriculum as an issue for discussion.

Conclusion

We have argued that the current context of democratic renewal can help adult literacy practice to shift its emphasis on the development of individual technical skills and embrace an approach which prioritises critical thinking and social action. Critical literacy that draws on the wider curriculum made possible by the new cultural developments in Scotland should be able to contribute to people's self-worth as well as to their competence in handling different literacies and the contexts in which they are used. This, in turn, could facilitate a more genuine dialogue in the curriculum. In the current conjuncture the 'resources of hope' for richer and more varied literacies to emerge could inform a more reflexively constituted curriculum. Literacy programmes that help people to be true partners in their own learning involve paying attention to literacies that are culturally productive, through supporting the real life context of the communities in which they are located and challenging misrepresentations about people's own lives and experiences.

Much needs to be done but there are signs of this work already underway. The broader context of democratic renewal can provide the impetus for a more critical and creative curriculum which will benefit students. The manacles of a functionalist and technicist approach to literacy need to be loosened and this is an ideal time to do it. The dominant culture is not monolithic and there are opportunities for resistance and contestation which recognises there are many literacies and that none are neutral.

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Learning in virtual space: potential and pitfalls in electronic communication

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore aspects of the use of computer-mediated-communication (CMC) during the teaching of a postgraduate course offered as part of two programmes: two modules in the M.Ed. in Training and Development offered by the Centre for Adult Education at the University of Manchester; and a taught unit in the Masters/Doctoral Programme in Adult Education and Human Resource Development in the Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia (UGA), USA. This collaboration had its origins in earlier exchange arrangements between the two institutions. Early attempts to establish electronic links between members of these two institutions are reported in Davis, (1997) and Davis & Holt (1998).

The course, called Reflective Technologies in Work-based Learning, comprised 15 participants. In addition to the two course tutors, there was another T-group trainer and a technical facilitator. One of the participants was a researcher working on the project. The face-to-face week was divided into two main elements: a T-group laboratory (see, for example, Miller, 1989), and an action science laboratory, during which latter time participants were introduced to the theory and practice of action science and underwent their first experience of presenting a case study. In addition, technical training and support was provided by the technical facilitator in order to familiarize the students with the software that was going to be used in the computer mediated component.

Action science works through the interrogation of case studies to discover where the gaps and inconsistencies lie in conversations: between what we think and what we actually say, between espoused theories and theories-in-use (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985) A case study is a transcript (as near as can be remembered) of a conversation which is felt represents a problem in communication. The context is given then the page is divided in half. In the right hand column the actual words used are written along with any non verbal cues which seem relevant. The left hand column contains unspoken thoughts and feelings (see, for example, Brooks & Watkins, 1994)

Findings

The computer mediated component of the course, which is the focus of this paper, was conducted over a five week period, using the groups that had been formed in the initial face-to-face meetings . Each student took it in turns to present their second action science case and have it interrogated during the period Monday to Friday of each week. An hour each Saturday was dedicated to a synchronous conference, conducted in real time. In all, fifteen case studies were presented over the five week period and this data are currently undergoing analysis using the qualitative software package, NUD*IST and will be the subject of further papers. The focus of this paper is the extent of student interaction and the possible impact of the tutors' roles.

Behind the screen

The most significant potential area of failure for any virtual environment is non-attendance, or put less strongly, the lack of productive participation, by which we mean reading but not writing. By making participation a compulsory element of the course for the purpose of gaining the qualification, this problem could, to a certain extent, be circumnavigated. However, this may not be sufficient. Riel and Levin (1990) give a list of what they consider necessary to get a good, successful network to function effectively: to enable participants to recognise a presence behind their computer screen. Their criteria were as follows:

- Does the group already exist?
- Is there a need for communication?
- Is there a shared goal or task with a specified outcome?
- Will access to the technology be easy and effective?
- Will all participants have regular patterns of mail access?
- Is there a person who will facilitate group planning and work?

The Reflective Technologies cohort met these, to a greater or letter extent, as follows:

- The virtual component arose from the f2f
- The group was transatlantic in composition; furthermore 'attendance' (i.e. participation) was a course requirement for the UGA cohort
- Case studies had to be interrogated by the group; these then became the basis for individual written assignments.
- Facilitate.com is extremely user friendly (some people did experience server and other technology difficulties)
- Some people had problems of access (holidays, work commitments)
- The technical facilitator was responsible for creating the virtual space in which the discussions took place The capacity for individuals to take responsibility for their group was exploited to varying degrees.

What is interesting from our point of view is that we had three sub-groups on line who fulfilled the criteria 2 to 5 to the same degree, and yet they were very different in their levels of participation and 'atmosphere'. This might suggest at first glance that the last two functions are particularly important.

From an analysis of the data it is possible to speculate about some of the reasons for the relative success and failure of two of the groups and it might be possible to draw some conclusions as to how to manage groups more effectively. Before we do that, however, we need to examine some of the characteristics of success and failure.

Differences in the groups

Our first analyses were mainly quantitative and at the very least give some insight into the level of activity in the three groups though not its quality. For the purposes of this paper, we are looking at Groups 1 and 3, the most and least successful, respectively.

Members of Group 1 interacted with the server on 6866 occasions, compared to Group 3 who managed only 2500. Individuals' interactions ranged from 949 - 1715 in Group 1 and 205 - 893 in Group 3. The mean for the groups was 1373 and 500 respectively. What these numbers describe is participants' engagement with the software through interaction with the server that takes them around the various screens in an on-line case study. While this is not necessarily a passive activity, it does not demonstrate the more active role of contributing to the discussion through writing an intervention. Examination of the number of interventions also revealed that Group 1 was the more active, with 497 entries, compared to 166 from Group 3. Even the least active Group 1 participant at 68 made more entries than the most active from Group 3 (47). Means were 99 and 32 respectively.

As is evident from these figures, there is a substantial difference between the number of times participants addressed the server and the number of interventions they made. Interestingly, however, the ratio of interactions to interventions is very similar across the conference as a whole, ranging from an average in Group 1 of 14:1 to that in Group 3 of 15:1.

Group 1 individually and collectively interacted most frequently with the server. In both Groups 2 and 3, however, there were participants who were more active than the norm for their group. There is a marked difference between the groups in the way in which they functioned, however. Not only did Group 1 interact more frequently, but there was a shared culture of a relationship between interaction and intervention not demonstrated by the other two groups, something which we will examine later.

This form of quantitative analysis does, of course, reveal little or nothing about the richness of activity in the groups, but as we will see, there is a relationship. As well as the tentative conclusions we can draw from this quantitative analysis it is also possible to consider how differently the groups experienced the groups by a brief look at a few interventions which show that a virtual classroom has an atmosphere of its own despite the lack of physical presence.

> *Jagruti (Group 3): Could we have a synchronous session this week? I for one would like to have more interaction w/in the group. To me, our group feels somewhat lifeless.*
>
> *Marianna (Group 3):Karen, this IS a great exchange. [...] Do you mind if we continue and then come back to this?*
>
> *Marlene (Group 1): I've got to say that I have and I'm enjoying working with you. You are a very reflective group. And I will miss this. Today I was thinking that during this five weeks I have felt helpful, happy, useless, frustrated, annoyed and I have laughed. I have been very excited and engaged with the task. In my undergraduate career I have never been through so many emotions as I have been on-line.*

And this piece of dialogue:

> *Marlene (Group 1): Be careful not to get focused on the other person in the case.*
> *Molly: Hi, Marlene! I'm not sure what you mean by focusing on the other person. Do you mean Jeannie, or X (in the case) and why are you suggesting this? I'd really appreciate it to know your views on this. It took my an hour to put all this together and I don't know if the result is what I intended.*

In speculating about the differences in levels of engagement and activity between the groups, it is possible to identify a number of characteristics that were features of Group 1 behaviour. Group 3 almost invariably demonstrated the opposite characteristics.

- first casewriter subsequently proved herself something of a virtuoso
- powerful, interested, intelligent group of individuals
- individuals each took responsibility for the group
- positive feedback readily given
- escalating atmosphere of enjoyment and excitement
- a culture of interaction/intervention
- levels of participation openly discussed - evidence of metacommunicative behaviour
- high levels of interaction
- all members contributed a significant amount every week.
- a tendency to treat feedback very seriously and use it as the building bricks of personal insight
- chat room instituted in first week - friendliness and concern for each other
- lurk room instituted - this validation of lurking suggests comfort with this aspect of the technology
- 2 graduate assistants and one research assistant in the group
- one member using the skills she had gained, sought a further meeting in her work-based setting and actively resolved her case during 'her' week
- people were not allowed to 'get away with' model I behaviour
- a norm of trust existed whereby it was acceptable to challenge one other
- the group arranged synchronous meetings which had a different, more exciting atmosphere than asynchronous meetings
- from USA, 2 from UK
- women, 1 man

Discussion

All three groups had strong, articulate members but not all were able to harness their differences in a productive way. Riel and Levin advise that there should be some form of leadership in CMC. One or more people need to take responsibility for monitoring and facilitating the group interactions. Perkins and Newman (1996) define such a person as a virtuoso, '*a highly skilled practitioner of e-discourse*' (Perkins and Newman, 1996: p156), someone not normally set apart, but from within the group who '*serves as guide, gentle teacher and exemplar*' (Perkins and Newman, 1996: p163). We can identify a virtuoso in Group 1 who flourished within the active environment of her group. One member of Group 3 similarly showed a similar disposition but the setting did not enable her to fulfill her potential.

As with face-to-face interaction, norms were set early in the conference. Group 1's problem-solving approach to the challenges of the medium resulted in agreed synchronous meetings, a lurk room which validated reading without commenting, and a chat room. The chat room became indicative of a whole atmosphere of involvement and concern for each others' lives and a knowledge of each other evidenced by this quote:

> *Moira: Ah, Bernard, you guessed that I am a morning person! This morning, however, I took my husband out to breakfast, so I am a little later than usual.*

In contrast, the behaviour demonstrated by the first case writer for Group 3 may have contributed towards a norm of lower levels of participation. Indeed, he only made two interventions into his own case which clearly frustrated the rest of his group although their challenge was very mild, for example:

> *Jagruti: It is a little challenging to offer a ladder of inference without some feedback from you, Ritesh* ☺!

Following the lack of activity of the first week, Group 3 found it hard to pick up momentum. A slightly tougher challenge finally came in the fourth week.

> *Mayuri: The exchange among your three - Kate, Louise and Jagruti - caused me to wonder if Ritesh is/has been lurking during the case studies. I've wanted to know what you are doing since the middle of your case, Ritesh. If you are tuning in with us, as Kate mentioned, but just haven't had anything much to say, I'd just like to know. Are you there?*

There was no response from Ritesh although he did make a few more interventions unrelated to this process initiative. In a f2f environment it is possible to know if someone has heard what you have said, although their interpretation cannot necessarily be predicted. One of the difficulties of the medium is that there is no way of knowing if he even read the challenge. The other difficulty is that sending messages to someone who is not responding is bound to fail. It may, at that point, become necessary to use other channels of communication such as telephone or email, to find out why the individual is inactive.

As in f2f there is probably an optimum group size for this kind of work. Group size for this course were set at 5 but with 1 or 2 members inactive to a greater or lesser extent, effective membership was reduced to 3 or 4 which may be insufficient to generate ideas and challenge complacency. In a group of this size, it is not safe to be dangerous.

In order to encourage participation it may be thought axiomatic that the tutor has a particular role to help facilitate the student processes. Tutor interventions can take many forms from purely social, to directly challenging, to providing content or knowledge. Because e-discourse is a written form of communication all activity is powerful. This is particularly true of comments made by tutors. Comments can be read many times over and interpretations changed and flippant remarks take on a

more weighty aspect than intended, hence the perceived need for emoticons (visual symbols representing some non-verbal cues).

Although the tutors intervened approximately the same number of times into the two groups, the ratios differ because Group 3 contributed so much less.

The tutors made 31 interventions in Group 1 and 30 in Group 2, but the ratio of activity was so much greater because of the unwillingness of Group 3 to enter into the conference on their own behalf; and, we think it is true to say, because Group 1 actually needed us less. Thus the ratio for Group 1 was 17:1 and for Group 3 was 7:1.

For both groups this gives a mean of approximately 6 interventions from the tutors per case study. On the face of it then it would appear that the tutors were fair about the number of interventions they made. Further examination of the data, however reveals an inequity in the distribution of tutor interventions. This difference is particularly marked at the end of week 2 when the tutors had intervened 10 times into Group 1 and only 5 times into Group 3. It is possible that this could have given the group the feeling that the tutors were giving up on them. Silence is very powerful and Hardy (199x) suggests that silence from a tutor can be interpreted as lack of interest rather than non direction. This would have compounded the factors already mentioned such as incongruent personalities and early norms of low participation and hasty (but inappropriate and uncritical) acceptance of feedback.

The question remains about how much the tutors could or indeed should have intervened in the cases. Action science is a normative process and it could be argued that it needs to be modeled and explained. The extent to which the tutors did this, as well as demonstrated other behaviors, is examined in another paper (Davis, Watkins & Milton, 1998). That these two groups were different in composition is clear, but their biographical details and their performance and demeanor during the face to face laboratory do not obviously lead us to conclude that the less engaged group were less capable of doing the work, less emotionally or intellectually robust, or less committed to the course.

In a f2f environment to intervene more in a group which is struggling. It is hard to believe that more tutor involvement could have improved what was going on in Group 1, the situation with Group 3 is less clear. When an analysis of the transcripts showed that Mike Davis had not intervened at all into the second week of Group 3 he was shocked. The reason for his surprise was that he felt as if he had done a lot because he had visited their case study so often. Both tutors visited Group 3 more than Group 1 and both report that they were bothered at the time by the lack of activity in Group 3. These frequent visits gave the tutors an impression of active involvement which was not borne out by the printed texts. This is a potential danger and facilitators need to be aware that whilst they may feel involved when they are lurking, there is no evidence for the rest of the community.

It is hard to know what precisely the tutors could have done to encourage a higher degree of interaction. It is possible that they acceded to the early norms and were unable to counteract the effect of the atmospheres in the two groups. In the first week Group 1 was already dynamic and looking for ways to make the technology work for them. On entering the conference the overriding feeling was one of commitment and energy. Group 3 by contrast was far less exciting to enter and it was possible to go in and find nothing new had been added. To some extent, the energy level in Group 3 infected the tutors as much as the group and it would be hard to know what could have been added to facilitate the group more effectively.

Conclusions

The evidence from this analysis so far indicates that as with groups in face to face environments, some will be more active than others. What the evidence tells us, however, is that there are different kinds of activity: for example, that to lurk in cyberspace does not mean that you are not taking part. Indeed students commented favorably about the opportunity to enter a conference, read and then leave, only to return afterwards with there more reflective observations. This is not something that is

available in the clamor of the face to face seminar. This also has something to tell us about the role of the tutor: there are no easy answers. Group 1 could be quite direct in resisting our interventions, while Group 3 could not be persuaded to act against what they saw as their best interests: in this case, by remaining silent.

The data from this course is very rich and we have only begun to investigate the more qualitative features. Nevertheless, we see that issues of participation are not necessarily what we would expect and that the approach to facilitation is not obvious. Perhaps the richer data will give us a clearer insight into the complexities of the virtual classroom and enable us to avoid the most serious pitfalls of electronic communication.

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i This is an example of an emoticon - a visual expression of a smile.

Centering a degree on the periphery: curriculum design in Cornwall and the politics of place

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The spatial dimension of higher education in Britain has yet to find an obvious place in the literature. In most debates about teaching, learning and research the spatial context is either taken for granted or ignored. It becomes a mere container for educational and social processes. But places can be viewed as more than empty frames for social action; they can be seen as both historically constituted by social processes and also in turn constituting those social processes (Paasi, 1991). We aim in this paper to restore a sense of place to the discussion of the education of adults. We do this through locating the connections between space, teaching, learning and research in one particular place - Cornwall. After setting out the theoretical context, the problems of evolving and delivering a part-time degree in a Continuing Education department in Cornwall are located in the context of Cornwall's location as a periphery in a set of centre-periphery relations which help to explain both the constraints experienced and the teaching method and curriculum design that are being evolved.

The absence of an explicit discussion of space in the literature might be seen as unexpected for three reasons. First, its explicit absence is accompanied by an implicit presence. Spatial metaphors abound in discussions of adult learning. For instance, educational technology can be viewed as 'central' in the progress of distance education institutions such as the Open University (Evans and Nation, 1996), mature students are 'marginal' in higher education (Wilson, 1997) and learners are at the 'centre' of the learning process (Edwards, 1991). Second, we are informed that the university is now turning inside-out or exploding (Schuller, 1990). The place of learning is where the learner is. Universities are encouraged to develop their regional and local role. In this policy debate about the changing institution, place would appear to be taking on a new importance. And third, in a range of academic disciplines there has, arguably, been a 'spatial turn' over the last decade. In all directions a new awareness of spatial difference and the role of space and place is surfacing, in sociology (Day and Murdoch, 1993; Lobao, 1996), history (Kearney, 1989; Phythian-Adams, 1987), politics (Meny and Wright, 1985) and cultural studies (Basnett, 1997).

The spatial theory most commonly employed outside geography is that of core-periphery or centre-periphery. (Ironically, some geographers themselves are now rejecting this as insufficiently flexible for capturing the dynamic political and social relations that it purports to model (Agnew, 1995)). Centre-periphery theory, while taking on a number of guises, broadly involves a relational, comparative view of space. The paired concepts of centre-periphery can be used in two ways. They can form the basis of a model which explains behaviour. Thus places are situated in relation to centres and peripheries in a context of uneven development. Such a model highlights the territorial dimensions of the relations between economically more developed, politically more powerful and culturally more self-confident centres and economically less developed, politically weaker and culturally fragmented peripheries. Peripheries are then seen as 'distinct contexts, they form units of analysis worthy of our attention' (Wellhofer, 1995). Alternatively, centre-periphery can be seen as a cultural representation reproduced by certain interests, usually in the centre, and reproducing certain myths about both centre and periphery (see Chapman, 1992).

Cornwall can be seen as a periphery in both of the above senses. It has a chronically weak economy, with, according to Angela Eagle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, in a recent Commons debate, per capita GDP at levels only 69% of the European Union average (Hansard, 1st April 1998, col.1390) and its lack of political institutions is a symptom of political powerlessness. At the same time such economic and political conditions of peripherality have, it is argued, resulted in heightened 'expressions of difference' as people in this periphery consciously react against their condition (Payton, 1992). In addition, Cornwall has long

been imagined as a place apart by those in the centre, reproduced as a land of mystery and its people and landscape invested with the characteristics of otherness by novelists and tourist publicisers alike (see the contributions to Westland, 1997).

Political, economic and cultural peripherality have their counterpart in academic peripherality. Cornwall occupies a position of disadvantage in terms of the provision of higher education opportunities. Tight (1996), in one of the few attempts to provide a spatial dimension for higher education provision, has described the geographical patterns of participation. Cornwall is poorly provided for both full-time and part-time student places, along with other peripheral areas on the north, west and east of England. This disadvantage in terms of provision is exacerbated by the way the status scales of academic life are tilted.

Cornwall's local university was, before the 1990s, Exeter. Yet Exeter is located 100 miles from Cornwall's major population centre at Camborne-Redruth. Geographical distance tended to be extended by social distance. As late as 1967 writers based at Exeter could write about Cornwall as if it were a foreign country. According to the introduction to *Exeter and its Region*, published in 1969, Cornwall was 'still a land of many regions, mutually remote and parochial and very slow to change'. Exeter, in contrast, with its cathedral and university, was a part of 'metropolitan England', cultured and civilised (Barlow, 1969, 4). Exeter, present in Cornwall in the shape of a continuing education programme, had not developed degree provision there before the 1990s. Instead options for part-time degree study were provided by the Open University, which was recruiting higher than average numbers of students in Cornwall, while full-time degrees could be studied at Camborne School of Mines, later to amalgamate with Exeter University, and Falmouth School of Art, both specialist institutions with a limited range of courses.

Since the 1980s, however, there has been a considerable growth in the provision of both full and part-time places in Cornwall. But this expansion of degree places has occurred without the physical establishment of a university or higher education campus in the county. Instead, it has happened through a twofold process of what Tight (1996) describes as 'academic drift' (based on Burgess and Pratt, 1970) and 'academic expurgation'. Academic drift, the aspiration of institutions for higher status in the academic hierarchy, can be seen in the expansion of degree level and sub-degree HE courses (validated mainly by Plymouth and Exeter Universities) in the Further Education sector in Cornwall. In addition to Tight's vertical academic drift we may discern a horizontal drift as institutions move to capture new markets. Thus Falmouth School of Art changed its name to Falmouth College of Arts and in 1996 began to offer a part-time degree in English and Media Studies in an attempt to diversify away from its traditional concentration on the visual arts and design. At the same time academic expurgation, 'the tendency for academic institutions to drop their lower level work' (Tight, 1996) appears in franchised courses.

The outcome is a fragmented and unplanned provision, focused on certain disciplines but with limited choice in other areas. This fragmentation in terms of the curriculum is mirrored by a spatial fragmentation as six different centres in Cornwall (plus the Open University) compete for students, a pattern encouraged by the dispersed local settlement hierarchy. Such a provision, incoherent, ad hoc and unplanned, can be read as a corollary of academic peripheralization. Opportunities for pooling student resources are limited, and the consequence for staff qualified to teach at HE level is a jigsaw of short-term contract arrangements. While this proliferation of part-time contracts is a national phenomenon, representing the marginalisation of a category of academic staff defined by terms and conditions of employment (Schuller, 1990; Swain, 1998), it is also characteristic of general employment patterns in Cornwall, with a high proportion of casual and seasonal work generated by an economy overdependent on the tourist industry (Perry, 1993, 73-74).

Centres and peripheries can also be identified on different spatial scales. While Cornwall can generally be described as a part of the academic periphery, within Cornwall there are embryonic local HE centres and, as a consequence, local peripheries. Whether the building of a physical academic 'centre' is essential for further local HE development has become a matter of intense local

controversy. The University of Exeter planned a small prestigious campus near Penzance which has so far failed to attract sufficient funding (University of Exeter, 1995). The University of Plymouth has campaigned with one of the local FE colleges for a different kind of 'university of the future', dispersed over a network of education and training opportunities'; however, its latest publication also talks of forming a nucleus on a 'central campus' (Cornwall College, 1998). This debate is conducted in a political climate that makes it hard to pin down useful definitions of academic centres in terms of their key functions.

It is in this context that Exeter's Continuing and Adult Education Department has developed its first part-time degree in Cornwall. In this case, the 'centre' is the Department's base in Truro, housing offices and seminar rooms; the main venue is a nearby FE college with larger lecture rooms. Academic staffing consists of one lecturer employed on a full-time permanent contract and a panel of part-time staff. The second part of this paper gives a brief account of the thinking behind the development of a part-time degree in Cornwall. Initially, we were influenced by centre-periphery forces that caused us to look to the centre. However, subsequent reflection on the problems of peripherality led us to consider how we might overcome some of its constraints and begin to subvert dominant representations of peripherality held both by learners and others. It is here that theory connects most obviously to practice as we have begun to build into the degree profile elements that engage with and challenge the peripheral condition.

Developing a part-time degree in Cornwall

The development of a part-time humanities degree (BA in Historical and Cultural Studies) by Exeter's Department of Continuing and Adult Education can be explained as part of that wider movement of continuing education departments in the older universities into degree provision as a result of the changing funding environment in place since 1992 (see Rickwood, 1995). There is a general problem shared by all such provision in overcoming the marginality of adult and part-time learners. In Cornwall such concerns are exacerbated by the further challenge of marginality from the institutional core at Exeter, 90 miles away from Truro.

When this degree was first planned, we thought initially about ways of *compensating* for the distance from Exeter (Westland, 1998). This was primarily an issue of ensuring high quality provision for our students, but the necessity of obtaining a 'licence to practise' from the centre was never out of the picture. We had to convince the centre that a 'real' degree could be offered at what has often been dubbed an 'outpost' in the sticks. We were indeed acutely conscious of the resource implications of working at the margin with none of the economies of scale shared by Continuing Education departments based on campus. We also imputed to local learners a sense of these deprivations on the periphery, including a vague idea that they were missing out on the 'campus experience'.

It was not until the second stage, once the framework degree had been validated, that we set about *re-evaluating* the centre/periphery relationship. Was the approach we had adopted of minimising the drawbacks of being on the periphery, in order to meet the criteria of the centre, calculated to reinforce those very attitudes that we wished to overcome? Had we too easily made the assumption that the intellectual life of a university was at Exeter (or an urban centre like London)? Should we instead be attempting to support the development of students who were in every sense 'centred' - intellectually and psychologically capable of working in and looking out from the periphery with confidence? We began, as teachers, to re-think our teaching methods in order to maximise our local resources and also to help learners reflect on Cornwall's strengths and thus begin to re-think notions of resource-rich centres and resource-poor peripheries.

We therefore reviewed the components of transferable skills and subject content to identify elements relevant to our peripheral location. The most obvious need was adequate IT skills and facilities to access library catalogues, data bases and the Internet. This, we now saw, was more than a matter of compensating for a lack of campus facilities. The availability of information on line not only makes up for the lack of a campus library; it is also a powerful symbol of new possibilities for information exchange across institutional and international boundaries that minimises the necessity for formal membership of an institution. Carefully designed assignments can give a taste of these possibilities. However, it is becoming clear that a new kind of in/out division is being created among learners:

between those that have the skills and equipment to access the technology and those who do not. Dedicating a computer in the Truro department to those students geographically close enough to the 'centre' to make use of it outside the course evening may still disadvantage students who are living in more remote areas and unable to finance a home computer system. To partly redress this inequality, one of the first exercises undertaken by students (at the point where they join the degree programme after gaining 120 Level 1 points in the Department's Certificate programme or in other institutions) is to survey the Open Learning centres and other IT and library resources close to their home. Their findings will be pooled for future students, so that every year students are actively involved in updating a data bank of IT and information resources in Cornwall.

The second relevant skill, closely related to the first, is 'the identification and use of resources', slanted to the exploration of subject resources within the county. Part of a summer learning pack, designed to help students make the transition from Level 1 to Level 2, involves finding documents, buildings, locations, art works and artefacts linked to a specific area of British culture: this year, 'The Sea 1750-1840'. The third key skill, 'working with others', is a focus for certain tasks in the summer pack not only to develop teamwork abilities but also to build 'cells' of small groups of students working together which will then, we hope, grow into a wider network when term begins. The summer pack is introduced at an induction workshop in July where provisional 'cells' are formed; a main feature of the report back session in September is a brief presentation from each group based on one local finding.

The development of transferable skills should always be explicitly stated to students. In this case, the particular relevance of certain skills to their survival on the periphery should be made apparent in the workshops. But what may also emerge from structured discussion is a more sophisticated understanding of 'peripherality'. Do these students in fact feel inferior to undergraduates on campus, or do they feel a difference that is potentially a strength? What exactly do they imagine are the advantages of studying in Exeter or living in a cultural centre like London? Are there in fact benefits of a Cornwall as a 'learn place' that may not be shared by students at Exeter? In other words, high in the list of desirable 'intellectual attitudes' for our graduates is an understanding of centre-periphery politics. Geographically, the concept will present little problem to Cornwall students. The political, economic and cultural implications of marginality will be a theme tackled during induction and threaded through the curriculum.

This explicit awareness of centre-periphery relations infuses the curriculum design, notably through a strong element of Cornish Studies. This is a growing area of academic interest and one where the resources are not remote from us but local: the Institute of Cornish Studies (funded by the University of Exeter and Cornwall County Council and staffed by three full-time academics) is on our doorstep in Truro; the Record Office and two libraries with major Cornish Studies collections are within ten miles of us. Incorporating Cornish Studies into the main curriculum makes sense in terms of maximising local resources and facilitates the introduction of a thorough and theorised on-going debate on peripherality.

Ironically, this determination to challenge concepts of geographical and academic peripherality coincides with the predicted disintegration of university 'centres'. It is becoming increasingly clear that universities are being radically redefined in ways that weaken their claim to be necessary 'centres' of learning. One dimension is the tendency within every discipline and subject area for lecturers to locate their community on an international network rather than within their own institution. Another is the emphasis on the 'learn place' as the place of study, more often than not away from the campus (Ford, 1996). If these academic centres are already 'exploding' (Schuller, 1990), geographical peripheries, which are accustomed to coping differently and growing in political awareness, may well come into their own.

Working at the margins may indeed produce new insights, emphasising the 'centrality' of spatialization, the social construction of the spatial (Shields, 1991). Researchers at the edges of conventional disciplines, it has been suggested, are more likely to produce new thinking (Dogan and Pahre, 1990). Territorial as well as disciplinary margins may well benefit from a similar effect of 'creative marginality'. Particularly but not exclusively where Cornish Studies is concerned, our

students will be exposed to a lively inter-disciplinary research culture, one that gains its strength from its location on the periphery. The determination of the course team to reflect actively as practitioners on their own role in developing and delivering a programme on the periphery should also prove to be a source of the energy that flows out of marginality.

To conclude, reflecting on centre-periphery relations enables the practitioner to be aware of place. Being aware of place allows the teacher to make use of the strengths of that place and simultaneously encourages the learner to re-think simple cultural representations of centre and periphery. Furthermore, given the dialectic relationship of centre and periphery, introducing this dimension explicitly helps to encourage a grounded knowledge of, not just the periphery, but the role of the centre in constructing notions of peripherality and of the structures that maintain that peripherality.

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What is mind? It doesn't matter. What is matter? Never mind

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> Some readers may think that my tone of voice in this book is excessively polemical. .....Primarily I am trying to get some disorders out of my own system. Only secondarily do I hope to help other theorists to recognise our malady and to benefit from my medicine. (Ryle, 1973:11)

I feel myself pulled in opposite directions when challenged to write about the nature of the relationship between research, learning and teaching. One part of me dismissively declares, "What does it matter? They're all linked. Its perfectly obvious. Let's just get on with it." The other part thinks with equal conviction that actually it matters a great deal where future money, power and resources are concerned. It is a political more than an epistemological issue. But to wield any power around this I'm going to have to get epistemological about it.

Why it matters

In this paper I will begin by acknowledging my own political stance in relation to the conference theme which has been chosen in the wake of Dearing and in the midst of the setting up and 'academicising' of learning and teaching units in HE and of The Learning and Teaching Institute. I will include some personal reflections on my own experiences of learning and teaching as an adult, what has motivated me and what factors have influenced my understanding of research in particular eras and contexts. I will talk briefly about the concept of self-directed learning and some of the difficulties tutors face when trying to judge whether approaches to teaching which aim to empower students are succeeding or whether they result in them feeling abandoned and neglected. I will give examples of responses to different teaching and learning approaches by students from very different cultures.

As a teaching practitioner in higher education, teaching professional adults who teach and train other adults, and whose writing about pertinent experiences, practices and policies
I and others assess for an academic qualification, I will link this discussion to one about the epistemological issues I encounter in my practice. I will focus particularly on debates around the expression of 'knowledge' and learning through oral and written articulation, and how these might be viewed through diverse cultural lenses.

Climate of debate

The current, now you see it, now you don't, government policy on lifelong learning has triggered new set of configurations, one could say contortions, around teaching, learning and research in the education of adults. There is an air of uncertainty containing excitement, anxiety and frustration in equal measure. The psychological climate for teachers and researchers into the education of adults, within higher education at least, turns what ought to be vital, enjoyable, thought provoking, collegiate, passionate, committed debates into highly politicised games funders can get academics to play to compete for their support. The degree of seriousness with which anyone's perspective is taken in the debate and the price paid for tentative open inquiry or for publicly exposing practice to reflection, despite the popularity of the rhetoric, have become very high unless you happen to already have established credibility in the field or are protected by funding and organisational negotiations which genuinely encourage risk taking for these activities. I was really taken aback to find myself shocked by an article in the Education Guardian this week on an initiative at Nottingham Trent University (Midgley,1998:v). The initiative is admirable, the content familiar around the promotion of good teaching and learning practices. What shocked me was the naming of individual members of

staff in the article not because this was unethical as I am sure they will have agreed to it, but the fact that they could agree to it with such confidence. I presume this says something very positive about the environment in which the initiative is taking place. This is not universally the case.

One of the issues to discuss at this conference is how the current political, economic and psychological climate, be it adverse or liberating, effects congruency between learning and teaching and research content, approach and practice. I want to know if our understanding of the relationship has been in any way affected by post-modern, especially constructivist, approaches to epistemology, or whether we would be saying many of the same things if we were still talking and writing, say, in the marxist and liberationist traditions of the'70s. My own position is that either I am very impatient and change in the nature of these things is taking place imperceptably slowly, or that I am not looking at it right, or that an important and radically different stance has led to minimal radical effect.

The current crisis around the need to define the relationship between research and teaching is with us in part because of a conflict of interest between institutions and individuals who stand to gain from research being funded as a discrete and elite pursuit and those concerned that the quality of teaching will suffer if it is not both the subject and the object of research practice. It is not a new problem. In 1809 the German philosopher Humboldt, apparently a great supporter of academic freedom, stated that 'knowledge was most fruitfully extended where it was imparted...teachers made good researchers and researchers made good teachers' (Simpson, 1983:13).

But people are wrestling over how they relate for epistemological reasons too because our understanding of how we learn and how what we learn gets to become 'common knowledge' is fundamental to how we approach and delimit our responsibility, as teachers, for enabling students to learn. We could interpret Humboldt as meaning that teachers make good researchers in so far as they keep up to date with their subject in order to impart it, didactically. Or we could interpret this in a post-modern constructivist manner. Teachers actually extend their own and their students' knowledge during the very act of imparting it, through reiteration and dialogue. What gets to become 'known' at that point in time at least, is context and culture dependant. How robust or fragile that 'knowledge' will depend of the state of emergence or convergence of other such dialogues and the opportunities there are for their wider public exposure. If the dissemination of such dialogic knowledge is denied to teachers by separating their practice from research then what is common knowledge will remain seriously in deficit. It is already the case that many practitioners do not get the chance to disseminate their experience in the public domain.

There could be a case for saying we are frustrated or actively disabled from engaging in learning, teaching and research in a truly constructivist manner for complex reasons which are not just about perception, commitment, or ability. I believe this is because the liberating and potentially democratising effect of acknowledging individual contribution to the creation of knowledge also exposes the fragility of any attempts at political alignment and solidarity needed to guard such a perspective from attack. This becomes paradoxical as it hinges upon the concepts of academic freedom and responsibility in which we contend that this freedom is worth protecting but share little consensus around what it actually means (Tight, 1988:114). Solidarity can be required over a sustained period, even era, in order to promote genuine equality of 'voice'. It requires champions. Champions are not always able to model equality very well however much they believe in it because their own learning has been achieved in the context of inequality. They also cannot operate as equals for as long as they are needed as champions. Rare groupings of 'equal but different' are sitting targets for those who want to divide and rule unaccustomed as the former are at speaking with one voice. When they do so, it is very hard to establish if they are articulating commonly negotiated meaning arrived at as equals or whether the consensual process has involved the silencing of some voices around the agenda of the most dominant individual or individuals, as in the current criticisms being levelled at government back- benchers.

This dilemma is prevalent at all levels of concern about learning, teaching and research, be it in the relationship between teachers and learners; teachers, learners and research-as-in-knowledge, be that the acquiring or the creation of; and teachers, learners and research-as-in-scholarship.

Teaching and learning through writing and talking

In the quotation at the beginning Ryle is talking about his experience of writing his book The Concept of the Mind, as the vehicle by which he articulates what he has learned about the nature of the mind and its relationship with knowledge. I read it as him writing for himself in the first instance to clarify his ideas. Then rewriting with a more explicit awareness of other writers in the field he wishes to take note his ideas. And as such it illustrates the epistemological point I have made above. The term epistemology was used at that time to refer either to the theories of scientific knowledge or to theories of how we learn. In his day the debate was expressed through a discussion of the relationship between the rational mind and the empirical world. The idea that this relationship, once found and properly articulated could be universally agreed and agreeable may have been superseded by the 'it cannot be agreed and it doesn't matter if it isn't' of post-modernism. But for the reasons I have just articulated, the behaviour and theories-in-use by those engaged in discussions about the relationship between teaching, learning does not necessarily followed suit.

Most experiences of learning, of learning as you teach and learning as you research at some stage in the process involve shock and surprise. My natural tendency in these circumstance is to want to rush and share the shock with someone else. Either I do this in total excitement because I know I have come up with something new for me and want to check out whether I am the proud possessor of a truly original insight which I can't wait to pass on. Or I am doing it in a state of some anxiety because I am troubled by what I have discovered and need to know if it's just me or if others have had the same or similar experience or insight. In finding out the extent to which my insights are shared or not in this way I might start to learn at a deeper level or I might switch off and stop learning altogether, depending on the occasion or purpose of the learning. And as Cuba says, we also do this when we write about what we are learning. The process of writing becomes a process of learning in itself and not just an 'outcome' of it. 'To define writing as simply communicating ideas to others ignores the fact that when we write we communicate something to ourselves' (Cuba and Cocking, 1994:2). The more I pursue and check out against evidence which supports, adds to or detracts from my insight the more I get involved in what one might want to start to call research rather than 'simply' learning. The more rigorously I compare and contrast what I am learning with what others have published about a subject the more research gets to be called scholarship.

I have taken the pains to reiterate this as simply as I could here because although basic and most familiar to many it recalls for me the starting point for students who come on our distance learning postgraduate programmes for adult educators and trainers. Just how to write and what the value and point of it is, is very much on their minds throughout their study and it matters very much to them. It matters because they have to come to learn something which will help them understand their practice and its context better. It matters to them because it is through writing about what they have learned that they will have a better idea of how they contribute to the learning of others. And it matters because it is through their writing that they are assessed and become successful postgraduates. Each student has a different perception of our strategies for empowering them as thinkers and writers. Some are confident enough to challenge the structure or content of our support and teaching. They take an active role in negotiating and fine tuning our input to their learning. Others behave as if every word we write or utter, be that in our teaching materials or in our feedback on their work, holds a clue as to how they must think and write. They feel disempowered by any challenge to structure. As teachers researching our own practice we improvise and innovate, informally or more formally through explicit curriculum development and research. In innovating we take risks which cannot guarantee universal success but can only be understood and justified on an action research basis. In communicating this approach to students who need and expect a high level of structure we have to take care they don't think we don't know how to practice our profession whilst quite properly asking ourselves that very thing.

But although we cherish innovations in our teaching and learning where we can take time and care to develop them, we also relay much of the time on 'tried and tested' ways of communicating with students about the success of their writings and about how to improve it. My research in progress into the processes of feedback between tutors and students around assessment, whilst still at an early stage, is giving me some perhaps not too surprising indicators that as tutors we rely a lot on how we ourselves were taught to understand the values of learning, teaching and research. Only so much time and energy actually goes into adaptation or innovation and much of the time we rely on the familiar. Time pressures can be over blamed for this. But I don't think we should become overly defensive, as if we believed that all innovative methods in teaching and learning are bound to be better than ones we have become accustomed to. If the issue is that we can no longer use previous methods because of staff:student ratios then we must say so. Whether an approach to learning or teaching is familiar or innovative does not necessarily bear any relation to quality. This is not a conservative argument against innovation but my realisation that innovation does not necessarily improve matters.

As I illustrated above I also think it is very hard to keep learning things which fundamentally affect our behaviour, however much we are being urged or urge our students to think otherwise. For instance, at various periods I have been involved in interpersonal and group work skills training, involving peer observation and feedback. In preparing for this paper I had a look in my learning journal from one such course and was reminded of a particularly trait, of staring into the distance when trying to articulate something new. Though disconcerting to others I have never succeeded in changing. The best I can do is explain it so that people stop trying to work out what I am looking at. The fact that it is considerably easier to learn about doing things differently than it is to learn how, is one of the main epistemological reasons for the lack of congruency between research aims and methodology in teaching and learning.

Self-responsibility for learning, teacher influence and accountability

Most of the engagement we have with distance learning students is through our and their writing, though we also meet face to face at day or weekend residential schools. We encourage students to take responsibility for making their own experience of learning explicit through the use reflective practice approaches with some groups, and have made some use of email lists with others to encourage discussion and debate so that they can gain further confidence in the articulation of their own points of view by more exposure to the different perspectives of other students as well as from what they are reading (Edwards and Hammond, in press).

Distance learning programmes rely heavily on successful negotiations between teaching staff and students in relation to both understanding how to find the best ways of the latter learning from the programme. Student experiences of learning on the programmes inevitably vary widely. As the course attract students world-wide with specific clusters in the UK, Ireland and South East Asia there are different cultural expectations around the kind of teaching styles and relationships expected. By comparison with some of the more recent on-line distance learning models this course, with four text-based modules, tutorials weekend residentials or intensive seminars is perceived as fairly highly structured with a lot of introductory writings and theory. Some students express the desire for more structure, direction and explicit instruction about how to succeed whilst others feel this would be too constraining. In South East Asia in particular, amongst students who originally come from this region, there is a high expectation that university lecturers are the source of the most important knowledge about the subject as well as knowledge about how to study it successfully. This is not an unreasonable expectation in itself but becomes a problem in promoting the concept and practice of debate and independence of mind. It can also be considered improper behaviour to challenge a lecturer in public as disagreement potentially involves loss of face. In this context the desire to promote self-directed learning can come from two potentially conflicting motives. The first is genuinely predicated on the belief (and experience) that where the aims of the course and its modes of assessment are based on the application of theory to professional and organisational practice only the student can effectively chose what is most relevant to taking their learning forward, though they have to be well-prepared for that choosing. The second is the pragmatic one from the perspective of the educational institution providing the programme via distance learning methods in order to reach

students who would otherwise be unable to become students. There is, understandably, excitement and anxiety around these two imperatives as they can be interpreted and implemented cynically or with the genuine interests of both students and institution at heart. In the best circumstances tutors can end up working much more effectively with students under these conditions than if they were in a regular class. In the worst, students can feel abandoned and neglected. Judgement about which is the case and what to do about it is complicated by different levels of comfort and ease both students and tutors have around self-responsibility for learning and study, as well as the issues I discussed earlier.

Self-critique or self-promotion?

To conclude, I return to the central question as to whether it matters if there is a commonly held view of the relationship between learning, teaching and research, or not. How does it matter in our internal relationships with students and colleagues? How does it matter in how we present what we are doing to those assessing and funding our profession? And does it matter if there is congruence between these two?

If we remain congruent with these post-modern times it should not matter. No one configuration assures quality. We must argue for difference and diversity in practice. But in practice it matters a great deal where continued funding depends upon it. And it relates more fundamentally to the whole conundrum around academic freedom I raised above, and as Elton also warns:

> The Funding Councils wholly eschew being prescriptive; indeed they explicitly deny their right to be so in deference to academic freedom. Unfortunately such a complete absence of direction and of boundaries leaves universities insecure and leads in practice to convergent and even compliant practice across the....sector (Elton, 1995:45)

It has been said that the downside of the concept of lifelong learning is a lifetime of having to admit you'd continually got it wrong. This is not guaranteed to be an empowering experience. In certain domains it will certainly win you friends but it will hardly influence people you want to support you. So for those who are not expert already the careful balancing self-critique and self-promotion becomes another thing we need to learn.

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Only connect: learning, teaching and researching among the screams.

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> Here is a poem for
> the women who don't write poems
> who do the work because work is
> and do more work because work is
> who are: fast, kind, vacant, fat
> service and produce, produce and service.
> There are no words to write this poem because
> they have no words.
> Who would do their jobs
> if they had words. No more words. The poems over.
> *(Six poems for hospital workers* Diana Scott)

This paper focuses on processes of teaching, learning and research in the context of Women and Health programmes run in collaboration between an adult education agency, health promotion units, social services and fundholding general practitioners. The paper describes the programmes, including how they were established and are to be evaluated, within the discourses and agendas of the sponsoring agencies and our broader educational and political framework. It begs fundamental questions about the nature of teaching and learning when students, tutors and funders seek to make the most of their, often differing, roles and expectations within a 'learning space' which is carved out at the margins of mainstream educational provision.

The liaison between the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in the South East of England, and various health and social service agencies began six years ago when the WEA began a series of Women and Health programmes which were 'targeted' at women who were known to these statutory agencies. Many had been battered and abused, some had children who were considered at risk; all considered conventional adult education to be irrelevant to their needs or beyond their reach. The WEA had sufficient experience in the field of community and outreach work to know that the 'cold sell', the mere fact of offering provision, would produce little or no response from the intended student body. It was only by recruiting via the statutory agencies that the programmes had a chance of success.

The WEA was motivated by another crucial factor. The bulk of educational provision in this country is circumscribed within a discourse which conceives progress in terms of linear attainment and outcome. It is a hierarchical model which privileges formalised outcomes as part of a system of social reward and secures the bulk of state funding. Coupled with an increasingly individualistic and vocational agenda, the galloping elision between hitherto distinct concepts of training, learning, skills and education (Fraser 1995) has resulted in far fewer resources being available for crucial development work outwith the 'mainstream'. It was the WEA's intention to pump prime a range of programmes which would generate sufficient interest from non-educational agencies to encourage future financial support and embed the provision within the community. During the last six years, the programmes have generated sufficient credibility to attract sponsorship and contracts from health authorities, social services, GPs and charities. A successful lottery bid has ensured the continuation of the work for a further three years. Yet our experience of running these programmes has laid bare - educationally, ethically and in terms of objectives - the many contradictions and complexities at the heart of our endeavours which the rhetoric surrounding much public policy and practice significantly fails to acknowledge.

Differing agendas

In order to fund educational programmes such as these, welfare agencies need to be convinced that their priorities are being addressed. The latter are usually couched in single issue terms. In other words, social services sought a reduction in potential child abuse and better parenting skills. This in turn, would lead to fewer demands on overstretched and under-resourced services. The health sector was attracted by a possible reduction in calls to health visitors and GPs. The WEA wished to widen educational participation. The challenge lay in providing the space where these outcomes may be generated and in evaluating the process accordingly without compromising the integrity of any of the stakeholders. It was a challenge made all the more interesting by the tacit acknowledgement of many of the professionals that single-issue agendas fail to address the complexities involved; a more holistic approach is needed, and yet their own statutory discourses demand single-issue outcomes. From the outset, a kind of double-speak developed. The public voice of these agencies applauded the behavioural changes which met their requirements. The less formal and more private negotiations acknowledged the broader benefits which accrue from the patently holistic educational agenda. This tension between the public and the private was exacerbated by a mirroring tension within many of the professionals involved. Constrained and circumscribed by the requirements of their practice, many welcomed the broader horizons which the programmes offered. Others, fearful perhaps that the larger brush stroke might erase the need for their own single-issue projects, reacted with hostility and distrust and demanded that their own work was not compromised.

It was a tension which was further mirrored within differing sectors of the health authority. Local health promotion units differed in their own practices; some were constructed along single-issue campaigns, others pursued a more holistic agenda with professionals committed to social change and a discourse which echoed that of radical adult education. And there is a further important dimension. The normalising agendas of all the statutory agencies, health, welfare *and* education, call into question the extent to which their function as agents of social control, as opposed to their liberatory potential for individual and collective empowerment, may be appropriated for the greater benefit of the women without endangering the possibility of future support. How were all of these demands to be met without the clamour of professional voices drowning the needs and expectations of the students involved; the women who had been targeted as suitable recipients of our 'life changing' processes?

What do the women want?

Women targeted by social services, health visitors and educationalists are implicitly, if not explicitly, recruited as 'failures' in terms of parenting skills, organisers of family health and educational attainment. Targeted thus, they are targeted again by our programmes. They are the appropriate recipients of a project designed to create a safe space to gain the self-esteem necessary to function more effectively in the mainstream. Is this an educational project or a health and social care issue? Is this the domain of adult education or therapy? And how far do these questions in themselves reveal our own normalising agendas which define and delineate and thence circumscribe the potentialities of the very spaces we seek to create?

As educationalists, we state that our programmes are not single-issue campaigns but cover a range of experiences and articulate a realm of needs that may then be acknowledged and addressed. What does this mean in practice?

Each 24 week programme, at two hours per week, is based on *Women and Health* materials produced by the WEA. At the beginning of each course, the tutor negotiates the topics to be covered within a range including stress management, breast screening, talking to children about sex, PMT, dealing with teenagers, and the body and how it works. The women are encouraged to add to the menu with any other concerns of their own. These usually include sessions on diet and nutrition, first aid, and drugs and alcohol. The agreed programme then provides the framework for the following weeks' discussions, group and pair work, individual student presentations and visits from specialists provided by relevant agencies. Towards the end of the course, each group is visited by an educational guidance

worker who then offers follow-on advice and help at an individual level. Each programme is subsequently evaluated against the requirements of the sponsoring agency and a written report submitted.

The previous paragraph is couched in the language of the public face of the project. It makes reference to the various health agendas, whilst alluding to a broader educational context. This, in turn, includes reference to key adult education shibboleths: negotiation, pair and group work, individual student presentation and educational guidance to ensure progression. The reality of the sessions tells a different story.

Maria is 23 with four children. She lives on an isolated estate in a rural part of the country with poor public transport. Her partner visits every few months. Her depression has kept her confined to the house for the last two years. Her social worker has encouraged her to join a course and promised that transport would be available. Jane is 29. She is always angry but does now know why. Her baby is sick and cannot be left alone. She will not put him in the crèche. In the course of the first four weeks of the programme, she tells the tutor that other women's stories of abuse are frightening her. Two weeks later, she discloses a history of her own childhood abuse and her inability to sustain a relationship. Susan is 31. She has always wanted to be an archaeologist. She cannot read and left school at 15. Maggie is 21. She has 3 children. The youngest cries every time she puts her in the crèche. She is angry because the tutor has encouraged her to trust the crèche worker and allow herself two hours a week free of child care. She knows that the tutor does not understand her love for her child. Mary is 27. She has 3 children in the crèche. One has head lice and the crèche worker is overheard to complain to her supervisor. Mary leaves the programme despite the tutor's attempts to smooth the waters. Sue's partner does not let her out of the house without his permission. He follows her all the way to the centre and threatens her if she goes in. She begins the programme. One of the programmes is slow to recruit. The tutor suggests the women bring their friends along. All of them reply that they would love to but they have no friends. Annie is told by her health visitor that she needs psychiatric help and must attend the programme so that she can be properly referred. After two weeks, she tells the tutor that she was too frightened not to come, but terrified of attending because she does not think she is mad. Avis is seeing a community psychiatric nurse on a regular basis. When the course began, she asked if she might change the time of her session so that she could attend the full two hours. The nurse refused and so she takes a long bus ride every week in order to attend for one hour. Jilly wants to register on the course and has a young son. The head of the family centre tells her she cannot come because her son has special needs. This would require a dedicated crèche worker and the family centre head falsely assumes there is no extra money. Jilly does not join. Trish, the tutor, has invited members of her previous course to join a new one in town. She has checked with the local co-ordinator. When the women arrive, the co-ordinator tells Trish to send them all home because they are not her 'ladies' and there is no room for their kids. The fundholding GP is pleased with the outcomes of the course and commissions another 'on condition that none of the previous women attend; they have had enough out of the system'. The community centre is closed down because social services have no money to maintain it. A grant from the council allows it to be re-established in a room attached to the local pub. The Women and Health course has run for five weeks when the centre is shut down again because the promised money does not materialise. Local feeling is that influential players may consider the pub to be a poor venue for social improvement.

As educationalists, we are committed to enhancing critical learning. We wish to encourage educational choice and opportunity; but we also seek to include some element of social critique at the heart of the learning process. Given our stories and our backgrounds, we understand the importance of placing individual pain and anger within the broader societal context. We want to use the flexibility of the course to empower the women to recognise that many aspects of their stories are shared and not singular and that collective action is a viable alternative to individual paralysis. We regard the manifest content of the course as a framework merely. Knowledge of the body and how it works is only a vehicle on the crucial journey to the heart and mind... There is no such thing as a neutral agenda.

For many of these women, their very survival has depended literally on shutting down and shutting out. The act of sharing an experience requires the basic communication skills of talking and listening. When the fact that getting through the day means swallowing the screams, the notion of discussion is a foreign country. The act of learning requires that early building blocks have been put in place. When 'learning' means shame and fearful recoil from the memories of school, the concept of the self-directed and autonomous 'lifelong learner', determining her own educational progression, lays bare the privilege and individualism upon which it is predicated. When tutor means teacher and authority figure, the offer of facilitated exploration is patronising and time wasting.

Given the realities described above, it is a telling tribute to the tutors and the students on these many programmes that the outcomes generated managed to satisfy both the sponsoring agency and the educational priorities. Many of these women make significant behavioural changes which may be quantified and evaluated in accordance with the single-issue requirements of health and social services. Some give up smoking, some begin to deal with their drug addiction, some choose healthier lifestyles in terms of diet and nutrition for themselves and their families. Some find jobs and reduce their dependence on welfare, some leave abusive partners and reduce the call on social workers. The children's developmental changes are monitored in the weekly visits to the crèche and fewer visits are required from health workers. GPs notice the reduction in visits to the surgery and less demand for tranquillisers and anti-depressants.

In mainstream educational terms, there are equally demonstrable outcomes. Some of the women progress to Access courses, all attest to the greater knowledge they have gained and almost all wish to join further Women and Health programmes with the WEA. But what of our broader aims and objectives? What about the critical learning that we seek to encourage in order that the women may gain greater self-esteem and transform the screams into words of assertion and empowerment? And how do we achieve this, as educators, without compounding a further sense of regarding these women as failures and objectifying them to the point where they are suitable recipients of our philosophical and ideological largesse? For whatever degree of fragmentation the women suffer, it is vital to remember the sheer effort of will required in bringing up families in isolated circumstances and with very little income (West, 1996).

McConnel/Scarlett (1981) has utilised the work of Paulo Freire in analysing the educational process within penal institutions.

> ..Freire operates on the basic conviction that every person, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence', is capable of looking critically at their world by entering into a dialogue with others about it. Given the proper tools for such an encounter, it is possible for individuals to come to a realisation of their personal and social existence, their perceptions of the world, and to develop a critical awareness of these. In this process...the old hierarchical and paternalistic teacher-student relationship is overcome. 'Men (sic) educate each other through the mediation of their world', and 'concientization' takes place when people begin to act upon their new knowledge and awareness.

The tutors jettisoned their learning manuals and abandoned the notion of progressing systematically through any semblance of a conventional syllabus. In one extreme case, where all attempts at group discussion ended in chaos, the tutor spent several weeks using co-counselling techniques to create a safe enough environment for the women to be able to talk and listen and gradually keep the anger and silence at bay. At the end of the first term, when the strain of verbalising pain and frustration was once again threatening the cohesiveness of the group, the tutor brought along her collection of African drums. Every woman had an instrument and after some initial embarrassment, the entire group made a harmony of their individual discordances. Another group, which bonded almost immediately, has spent an equal number of weeks on what would traditionally be termed 'introductory sessions'. The

need to tell and re-tell their stories, and the experience of being listened to without judgement and condemnation, has encouraged the educative progress 'through the mediation of their world'.

We are using the *women and health* model to enable us to reach the students. Yet what happens during the process of the programme begs other fundamental questions about the blurring of traditional boundaries between education and therapy. We present an agenda which seeks to reduce the 'targeting' element so familiar to our students who have been objectified for most of their lives by statutory agencies. Yet we articulate ourselves within the health arena - we could not advertise a programme offering a space for self-disclosure - yet this is what inevitably happens and elides our process with that of basic therapeutic methodologies. Some of our tutors have community counselling and/or therapy experience. Others are selected for their known skills in managing processes of change in others. But these factors are not the key issues for selection. All of the tutors are first and foremost educators; yet what would happen to our expectations as educationalists if the entire course were conducted along the lines of traditional pedagogic intervention. If the programmes were limited to acquiring knowledge and facts about the body and its healthy maintenance, we might be minimising the likelihood of future disease, but what about our assumptions that the women's fundamental dis-eases were not being addressed.

The reality is that projects such as ours cannot adopt a fully student-centred approach from the outset for reasons which we trust we have made clear. And so we seek a balance between our assumptions of what is required until the space is filled with the expressed needs of the women.

The role of biographical research

We have had to reformulate our definitions of teaching and learning. We have worked, and continue to work, within a particular set of statutory parameters. We have generated sufficient and creditable outcomes to impress those statutory agencies. Yet the real indications of success do not conform to the requirements of traditional pedagogy.

Maria comes to each session. It is the beginning of her re-engagement with the world outside the four walls of her house. Jane's baby is better. Jane is much less angry and organises transport to the programme for the women near her who cannot rely on the bus. The drummers have all finished their first course and now, all but one, make the journey into town to attend a further programme.

In order to applaud these milestones, we are establishing a longitudinal, biographical research project. It seeks to empower both learners and tutors as their courses unfold. By encouraging the women to explore and reflect on their own stories, on more of their own terms, we seek to end some of the silence and exorcise the screams. The research will engage the women not simply in articulating their experience of the programmes, but also in interpreting the 'data' and theorising its meaning, in what is intended to be a profoundly dialogical process. But such research, like the programmes, is problematic; particularly in articulating and preserving an appropriate boundary between research and therapy. A code of ethics governs the work, in which the well-being of the women is paramount, but telling stories, among the screams, takes us into uncertain border country, where definitions of research, like those of teaching and learning, may need to be reformulated. Of course, there is the option of not doing the research, or of utilising more standardised procedures (questionnaires with built-in scales, to 'measure' change, for instance) (Lalljee et al, 1989; West, 1996), as a way of 'controlling' the process. But this would mean either that stories are not heard, and developed, at all, or that they are constructed, once again, primarily on others' terms.

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A gendered appraisal of the transition to a Learning Society in Britain

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Introduction

This is an early report of a regional study of participation in lifelong learning using four main sources of data: structured interviews with a systematically representative sample of 1,104 adults aged 15-65 in industrial South Wales, further semi-structured interviews with 100 of the sample, the taped oral histories based in the South Wales Miners' Archive in Swansea, and interviews with people involved in the local provision of training over the past 50 years. Since the dataset is so large and analysis of some sources is at an early stage the following report should be seen as indicative of the direction of the study. The region, sample, and methods are further described in Gorard (1997a), Gorard and others (1997a), Gorard and others (1997b), and Gorard and others 1998a), while the analytical framework for the project is discussed in Rees and others (1997).

The paper suggests that an overall analysis of the trends in participation in adult learning obscures more complex patterns of changes in participation for various social groups. It is assumed that the location of an individual within the social and normative structures of the day is a key determinant of their participation or non-participation in post-compulsory education and training. One relevant aspect of social structure is gender, and it is one which creates a clear 'climate of expectations'. It is within the limitations and constraints imposed by these expectations that individuals may seek to make rational choices, and it is only within the patterns of behaviour that these constraints produce that the exceptions of people 'breaking out' can be properly understood. In presenting a 'gendered appraisal of the transition to a learning society in Britain' this paper describes elements of progress towards greater participation for women, and some elements of progress towards non-participation for men since 1900. Unless the strength and weaknesses of 'learning societies' in the past are acknowledged there is less chance of encouraging useful and transforming lifetime learning for the future.

Coalfield 1900-1944

A Learning Society for men?

At the turn of the century South Wales was one of the largest and most important centres of learning in Britain. It was in the midst of absorbing agricultural populations from mid-Wales, the West country and further afield, and converting them into a new society. The colliery workforce almost trebled through in-migration over 30 years by 1920. Perhaps those who came seeking a better life (often sorely disappointed) were self-selected pioneers, or perhaps the challenge that their old skills were largely redundant, and they had to learn about the alien environment of the pit led to a community of learners. Much of the learning was of the techniques and terminology of mining, especially safety since 'if you don't learn it properly you'll most likely get a stone on top of you', but the teaching that went on in the pit was far more than was necessary for the job. At the South Wales Miners' Federation meetings, or the 'double-parting' where they took breaks men like Wil Jon Edwards learnt of Spencer and Darwin, and above all of politics.

A culture of learning existed within coalfield society. Underpinned by a nonconformist ethic was an ethos which encouraged self-improvement and a general assumption that young men should study for self-advancement. Will Lake used the remainder from his first wage as enrolment fees for mining classes, one of many 'boys' wanting to climb the ladder to colliery management. In 1906 over 3,000 students were engaged in mining study in Glamorgan, in which county courses were run in 66 villages. Men like J. L. Williams came to the valleys aged 18 in 1906 looking for freedom from the conditions of the farm, higher wages from the 'black gold' and 'more self-education'. He attended

evening classes run by the county council (but later went to study at the Central Labour College, becoming an adult education organiser and eventually an M.P.).

The effort to study after a full day's work was considerable. Walter Haydn Davies recalled that 'to study mine surveying [we] used to walk over the mountain from Bedlinog to Bargoed where the classes were held'. Albert Davies had to wear his coat to do his homework in the bedroom since only the family room had a fire. Miners subscribed to journals and took correspondence courses, paying as much as four guineas subscription (a very large sum). However, this was not encouraged as what Walter Haydn Davies termed 'self-centred individualism', but as long as it did not detract from the collective good. By 1913 more students were attending further education in Merthyr than in any period since, until the growth in learning opportunities was curtailed by the Great War.

After the war, Harold Watkins found that the mood of students in Glamorgan had changed. Interest in commercial subjects and mine management waned, seen perhaps as being too self-interested or more to the benefit of the bosses than the learner. Many now wanted 'to find out about things', especially economics. Will Coldrick had combined pit work with a study of commerce, but during the war he attended independent working class lectures (WEA), and later went to the Labour College. The Labour College Movement held that general and technical education were not enough: a different kind of education was also needed. Anti-capitalist feeling increased, and qualified miners such as Jim Vale declined offers to become managers, since 'going over' had become another form of self-centred individualism. Learning for these men become more clearly a transformational rather than a promotional process, ideally leading to advancement of one's class or community as well as one's family. As social and economic difficulties affected the coalfield with the depression and the coal disputes leading to entire villages 'on the dole', this learning ethos was undiminished (in direct contrast to findings of Jahoda and others 1972, in Austria). In fact, during the depression attendance at institutes increased, and the peak use of libraries came in 1926 with a record 49,161 annual loans and new libraries still opening. The chief growth was in borrowing of non-fiction (Eaton 1987). By 1935 there were 517 separate adult courses in addition to 'recognised' places of learning, catering for 10,246 students and the supply was still not equal to the demand (Welsh Department 1937).

Women in the coalfield

The role of women in the functioning of the coalfield has been described as 'essential', but because coal was the basis of all local paid employment and women were prohibited from the pit, their work was unpaid. Of perhaps 150,000 people in the Rhondda in 1911 only 7,000 were women in paid employment, mainly young and unmarried. This also kept women outside many of the opportunities for formal learning available to the men at the time. The Board of Education later stated that the 'majority of the women's classes are not intended to a preparation for posts in industry.... but are because women wish to acquire greater skill and aptitude as homemakers'. It was expected that women would give up paid employment on marrying, and a typical occupational life span of the women interviewed for the archive was only five to 10 years. If a woman aspired to a profession and a career, her best option was to lie about her marriage as Mrs D J Davies did. A societal prohibition on paid work was extended quite easily to educational aspirations, and the Director of Education in Merthyr during the Great War even objected to married women, 'past the prime of life', attending classes in domestic studies. 'The Committee's Evening School Regulations should be amended to exclude them'.

When economic difficulties faced families in the coalfield the impact on women may have been greater than on men, and increasing numbers of girls were required to leave to work as domestic servants in English cities. Mrs Fine left when she was 16 to become a 'between maid' in a TB clinic in Hertfordshire, with a half day off and a break of two hours in a day lasting to 10pm. She married at 20, 'otherwise I would have been in service I expect'.

Women had limited access to many social institutions in the valleys such as institutes and pubs, so the chapel became a focal point for the formation of womens' clubs. Until the 1930s funding was a problem - as women could not be employed, they were not unemployed, but they could be the

'womenfolk of the unemployed'. Starting as occasional meetings offering limited learning opportunities, often in space reluctantly provided in the mens' institutes, by 1939 there were more womens' than mens' clubs in South Wales. This provision of clubs by and for women is an important feature of interwar coalfield society that has not previously been emphasised.

Learning Trajectories 1945-1996

There is insufficient space here to trace the development of adult learning from the basis of technical education, non-conformism and anticapitalism described above to the learning society of the post-war period (see Gorard 1997b). The post-war period of relatively high participation rates in all forms of learning, especially increased working-class participation in formal education (Francis 1976, Jones 1982, Kelly 1992), took place in an era of nationalised industries in South Wales, relative affluence (McIlroy 1990), and the 1944-46 settlement of great Acts provided a basis for the growth of the welfare state and universal secondary education. In South Wales therefore, some of the characteristics of a learning society may already have been in place in the earlier twentieth century - e.g. access to education lifelong, limited control of one's own education, learning for cultural and developmental reasons rather than exclusively economic ones, and changes in the forms of knowledge available to the working class (in addition to the more frequently cited social mobility of individuals). The tradition of adult education among working-class men was strong. They received initial education, plus job-related training in relatively stable occupations, and wider educational and developmental opportunities via the Institutes and Halls. These programmes were enriching and practical, with a cultural as well as a career progress emphasis (Istance and Rees 1995). However, this society, while changing, was still heavily gendered with womens' formal participation focused in LEA evening classes and university extra-mural provision.

The findings of the 1,104 semi-structured interviews with people who have lived and worked in South Wales from 1945 to 1996 have been used to create a typology of individuals' learning 'trajectories' (Gorard and others 1997b, Gorard and others 1998a). Four of these trajectories are discussed here. The **non-participants** are those who reported no continuous education after initial schooling, no substantive work-based training, no participation in government schemes, and no formal adult education. The **transitional** learners reported only full-time continuous education or immediate post-school work-based training so far in their lives. The **delayed** learners have a 'participation gap' after initial school until at least age 21, but then reported at least one substantive episode of education or training. The **lifetime** learners reported both transitional and later episodes.

The proportion of respondents following each trajectory vary significantly by age, making it clear that there has been a clear trend towards participation in some form of post-school education since 1945/46 when the oldest respondents left school, as heralded by educationalists and policy-makers. The proportion of each cohort reporting no formal learning has decreased (see Table I). However, this decrease is not chiefly to do with a greater return to education as an adult. The proportion of delayed learners has held relatively constant, or even decreased. It is the proportion of lifetime learners that has increased, along with the proportion of those participating only in extended initial education and training.

Table I - Trajectory by Age cohort

Trajectory	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Non-particip.	21	27	28	37	43
Delayed	6	8	20	17	22
Transitional	35	34	17	16	12
Lifetime	38	32	35	31	22

When these changes are considered for men and women separately (Tables II and III), it is clear that the increase in participation for males took place chiefly for those finishing initial education in the 1950-60s, while for women it took place a decade later in the 1970-80s. One implication of this is that whereas the reduction in non-participation for men was replaced by an equivalent increase in lifetime learning until the 1980s, for women the increase in lifetime learners was matched by an increase in the proportion of those participating only in extended initial education and training (the transitional learners).

Table II - Trajectory by Age cohort (men)

Trajectory	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Non-particip.	19	25	23	20	34
Delayed	8	11	19	20	22
Transitional	34	31	15	17	16
Lifetime	39	33	42	43	29

Table III - Trajectory by Age cohort (women)

Trajectory	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Non-particip.	22	28	32	49	54
Delayed	3	6	20	15	23
Transitional	38	35	18	15	8
Lifetime	38	30	29	21	15

Today's respondents tell stories that resonate with the earlier tales of coalfield wives, and their interviews have highlighted examples of female non-participants whose educational and vocational aspirations have been restricted and undervalued by brothers, husbands and fathers. Some have given up jobs and related training on marrying. Others have had their agency restricted, as in the case of the three Mancini sisters, all in their mid-twenties, whose father demanded they leave their jobs to run the family shop. Another woman, Mary, left her job to look after her husband's children, and Sue who at 26 left her management job in Birmingham and the prospects of promotion that she had trained for so that her husband could return 'home' to South Wales where he has no job and no prospect of a job. Female working and learning futures are shaped from a very early age as Anne Jones, now 42 years old, describes:

> My mother's one of those old-fashioned types that a boy has got to do it [education] but a girl is not important.... oh don't worry, it's only our Anne. Anne stays at home and does the work.

Consequently, Anne's desire to be an electrician was thwarted by its stereotype as 'being no job for a woman', and instead of fulfilling her own desire for college she ended up subsidising her brother's university education.

What appears to have happened in the 50 or so years since the Education Act 1944 is that initial education has been extended, so that the majority of students continue to participate in education or training after the age of 16, and a substantial proportion would now expect to continue to higher education at 18. The changes have particularly remarkable in the relative participation rates of women. However, this has made little discernible difference to many people's lifelong patterns of participation. If it was lack of involvement in paid work that was at least partly responsible for the non-participation of women in work-based (and worker's) education earlier this century, it may be the subsequent changes in the nature and forms of work that are partly responsible for the fact that women's participation in formal learning episodes has not increased in proportion to their involvement in the workforce. To some extent, extended initial education has replaced formal job-related training, and to a larger extent, extended education now involves those who in previous generations would never have experienced any formal adult education or training. Unfortunately this experience of extended education is not sufficient by itself to encourage later participation. Of the

1,104 participants in the study aged 16 to 65, over 31% had experienced no education or training outside compulsory education - e.g. no further education, no job-related training, no evening classes, no health and safety training, no hobby requiring study or sustained practice. Over the 50 years covered by the survey, these non-participants have decreased in proportion as they are constrained to stay in formal education after the age of 14, then 15, then 16, but they are replaced, in the main, by those who report no further participation once they do leave.

Conclusion

To some extent 'Learning Society' is used by policy-makers and academics as a term of convenience. It is an ideal notion, but one with very prosaic targets couched in terms of certification, which helps mask the lack of real progress in some respects towards an 'educated public'. It is important not be misled by the selective nature of records from the past, and it must be stated that in many respects educational opportunities for adults are far greater today than they ever have been. However the chief change has been one of increasingly front-loaded provision leading to prolonged adolescence. With health and safety training, and short IT courses prevailing in the vocational sector, does today's learning society provides the same breadth of education about what Harold Watkins called 'what's going on'? Has education led to greater critical awareness? It is clear that policy-makers arguing for a new learning society do not really want learning to lead to critical dialogue and action to improve the quality of life of the whole community. This is not the stuff of policy-borrowing from Taiwan or Singapore. Advocates of human capital theory cannot explain training to be a manager and then refusing the promotion on principle.

When progress towards a learning society in Britain is accounted separately by gender, women respondents today still tell stories that would have been recognisable to Mrs Davies in 1911, and that have been referred to as 'enforced altruism' (in Gorard and others 1997c). And yet it is women's participation that has driven most of the apparent increase in formal education and training over the past 50 years. For men there is such an emphasis on the 'barriers' to participation, such as cost and travel, that it is difficult to imagine Walter Haydn Davies and his friends walking over that mountain in winter. Perhaps the barriers are not the chief problem? If not, then the 'blame' for non-participation may lie in the motivation of individuals, but it may also lie in the perceived nature of the opportunities on offer.

A learning society is generally seen as future ideal state, one towards which Britain is or should be striving. However, advocates of greater educational equality and industrial competitiveness are not new (Cropley 1977). The standard learning society analysis may be too simple, suffering from what Yeomans (1996) calls 'historical amnesia'. We have been here before, as early as blaming the loss of industrial pre-eminence on a failure of the education system in the late nineteenth century (Rees 1997). In Britain, many of the policy components of a learning society were described and advocated by the Smith Report of 1919 (Lowe 1970), although few were implemented, perhaps because lifelong education proposals often seem idealistic rather than practical to educational planners (Furter 1977). Lifelong learning was not perceived as having the economic benefits claimed by some more recent writers. For the 1917 Adult Education Committee, education was the key to a better society. Although there was some emphasis on the economic benefits of learning, a special concern was that education was not simply for personal benefit alone but for the common good. Education should have a collective purpose. However, the report wisely accepted that educational progress does not come from educational reforms alone - in today's terms a learning society cannot be created just by providing more learning - and its recommendations included more leisure time for all, through longer holidays and shorter working hours, sufficient wages, better living conditions, and holidays with pay. It was perhaps when society came closest to achieving these worthwhile goals, in the aftermath of the post-war settlement that South Wales came closest to becoming a learning society. In some respects progress may have been retrograde since.

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Enquiring into Group Learning On-Line

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On-Line Discursive Environments for Adult Learning

Formalised computer-mediated learning through asynchronous discussion in what we would recognise as an adult learning mode dates at least from the Western Behavioural Sciences Institute's experimental seminars of 1982 (Feenberg, 1989). Yet many of the issues arising from these early experiences, and reflected on by Feenberg in his contribution to the seminal 'Mindweave' collection, remain live and problematic for facilitators and designers of on-line learning.

With the availability of the Internet as a medium, computer-mediated communication (hereafter, CMC) exercises a growing attraction for all sectors of education; both for the kinds of intrinsic promise recognised by its early proponents, and increasingly for extrinsic reasons, under the influence of national and international policy decisions on delivery and organisation of recurrent education. This paper reflects on some motives for researching CMC discussions; some styles of investigation used, and their purchase on the interactions between individuals and groups in on-line distance learning; and suggests, with some small illustrations, how a pluralistic investigative approach can support co-operative learning and reflective practice in on-line adult learning settings.

The particular model for organising learning on-line which this paper assumes as relevant, on account of its congruence with the andragogical emphasis on group interaction and self-directed learning, is that of a 'virtual learning community'. This is the perspective followed by the MEd in Networked Collaborative Learning at Sheffield, from which the detailed illustrations in later sections of the paper will be drawn. A brief extract from the course description will serve to characterise the responsibilities of members of a learning community:

> [to] manage their own learning, and co-operate with others in theirs through processes of negotiation and discussion
>
> [to] participate in developing the learning community perspective, which is based on participants and tutors taking collective responsibility for the design and evaluation of he programme, via constant review and modification of the design, procedures and ways of working
> (1998 MEd Course Description: online at http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/csnl/)

In considering the implications of researching this collaborative style of learning, the paper draws on the more extensive literature of virtual communities in general.

On-Line Discussion as Retrievable Interaction

In some respects, the CMC discussion medium is uniquely fitted for researching practice, since all utterances are captured and archived along with basic contextual information. Moreover, most discussion software includes rudimentary tools for re-ordering the discussion contributions - by sorting, searching or indexing - so that alternative perspectives on the interactions can be derived from, and to some extent within, the discussion environment. (They can, equally, of course, be reported back there.)

For a cogent summary of the implications of participating in the 'written community' of on-line discussion, we can turn again to the Feenberg chapter mentioned above:

> A group which exists through an exchange of written texts has the peculiar ability to recall and inspect its entire past. Nothing quite like this is available to a community based on the

> spoken word. The modification of language through CMC can best be understood as a new variety of 'social memory' comparable to such other mediated memories as storytelling, books, and mass communications.
> (Feenberg, 1989)

> The lack of tacit cues in this written group interaction dictates compensatory practices: the only tacit sign we can transmit is our silence, a message that is both brutal and ambiguous. . . the solution to this dilemma is explicit meta-communication... participants must overcome their inhibitions and demand further information. . . request clarification of emotional tone and intent.
> (Feenberg, 1989)

Where these compensatory techniques are well-developed in a group, the record of a CMC discussion can, paradoxically, be more complete than a transcript from an interaction embodying significant tacit elements.

Retrievability can also be a resource for democracy, empowering the individual by allowing space for reflection to make sense of discussions, and formulate views, without the face to face group pressure for instant assimilation and interpretation:

> In principle there is no reason why [such] retrieval should not be entirely under individual control since the technologies of retrieval do not require the presence of other human beings.
> (Feenberg, 1989)

Thus CMC has an inbuilt potential for supporting reflection and co-operative enquiry. How any of these possibilities are taken up, however, is in practice closely coupled with the social context or climate of a particular CMC implementation.

Interpreting CMC Discussion - Quantitative and Qualitative Orientations

Large bodies of text data with associated contextual detail invite abstractive and replicable styles of analysis. Quantitative measurement of on-line activity derived from system embedded functions was quickly adopted in the pioneering phase of educational CMC to demonstrate the flexibility of access arrangements and the emancipatory effect on learners. System information about levels of activity, spread of participation or volume of messages provided generalised phenomenal descriptions from which broad conclusions could be drawn. (See, for example, Harasim' s (1989) use of box-plots of on-line activity.)

The level of sophistication possible with more recent software technologies for embedding micro-scale analysis of messages is illustrated by the approach of the Project H research group (Berthold, Rafaeli, Sudweeks, & Coyne , 1997.) Their research developed a method for deriving characteristics of an effective CMC communication by training neural network software to check for co-occurrences of a range of parameters in individual postings. In the corpus of 3000 newsgroup messages investigated, the number of constitutive parameters considered was nearly thirty - giving some sense of the complex multidimensionality of even an unstructured interaction space. It needs to be mentioned that in this investigation, although the inferential process was handed over to software, the messages had been pre-coded by researchers for characteristics such as humour.

Whatever the scale of investigation, these broad quantitative styles of analysis read the discussion material as a single artefact, analogous with a literary text, consequently collapsing the temporal (or more precisely, for an asynchronous discussion, sequential) dimension of its creation. They thus offer scant purchase on claims such as Feenberg's about the constitutive practices which develop a social reality.

Approaches which most respect this temporal/sequential dimension are those qualitative, broadly grounded styles of interpretation which use the participant observer approach, handle a discussion

transcript as conversation, or reconstitute it as narrative (eg , McConnell, 1994, 1998). The multi-dimensionality of the many-to-many discussion environment poses problems for this investigative style, beyond the gross level of information management. Reconstitution of the discussion transcript as narrative or periphrasis, by attending closely to the sequential, recognises individual actors and their (apparent or recovered) intentionalities, but risks reducing the activity to a single convergent space. It may also underplay the performance aspect of participation, the aspect of self-creation on-line identified by Feenberg (1989) or Paccagnella (1997), in favour of an essentialising 'authenticity' of individual experience.

Contextualising Investigation of On-Line Interactions

In a recent discussion based on empirical research with an undergraduate population using CMC, Jones and Cawood (1998) caution against adoption of the on-line discussion transcript as an authoritative account of learning interactions, criticising it as both partial and misleading. They point to supplementary activity absent from the transcript - social interactions and negotiations occurring outside the CMC environment; and to the status of the transcript as a publicly engineered record.

Their caution is worth heeding, but their findings are heavily influenced by the specific source used in their study: a single network-delivered module in the context of a place-based undergraduate degree course in communication studies, a module which also included supporting face to face meetings. Their ethnographic observations had indicated that course members actively constructed through off-line collaboration an on-line artefact to be presented to their tutors for assessment. The social context was one of pre-existing face-to-face networks, a competitive learning culture, and a perception of conflicting interests between teachers and taught, crystallising around issues of assessment of the on-line discussion contributions. The students' ability to bend the technology to their own ends imay be taken as a reminder that:

> groups are realities in their own right, with socially specific needs that must be served by CMC technology.
> (Feenberg. 1989)

In itself, the difference between collaborative and competitive learning cultures would produce a different practices in discussion groups.

The remote, as opposed to place-based, learning situation changes the status of transcript within the learning group: without a parallel strand of face to face activity, reality is invested in what takes place on-line (and everyday experience may take the role of the complementary inferred dimension - cf Paccagnella's (1997) observations on the status of off-line identity as a fiction from the perspective of on-line communication). And where a group comes together for the first time without any recognised common context, the place of group convergence needs to be deliberately constructed within the space of on-line discussion - the transcript of such activity may perhaps be interpreted as an archive of a collective performance.

If the role and status of the discussion transcript varies in different learning situations, the researcher may need to consider divergent methods for divergent contexts. The following sections address the question - what interpretative approaches are appropriate for co-operative group learning which takes place substantially or entirely on-line?

The On-Line Community as Context of Investigation

In the longitudinal study made by Baym of a group constituted around a specific external domain of interest, the RATS soap opera Usenet discussion forum (1992-1995), a distinctive range of social conventions and styles of interpersonal support was observed. Baym concluded that what constitutes community in on-line interaction is the emergence of common understandings through a body of practice:

> Community is generated through the interplay between pre-existing structures and the participants' strategic appropriation of the resources and rules those structures offer in ongoing interaction. (Baym, 1995)

Following from Baym's analysis, the investigation of community requires the identification of methods for studying the development of custom and convention. and of social roles and identities, through the changing use of the on-line environment over an extended time period.

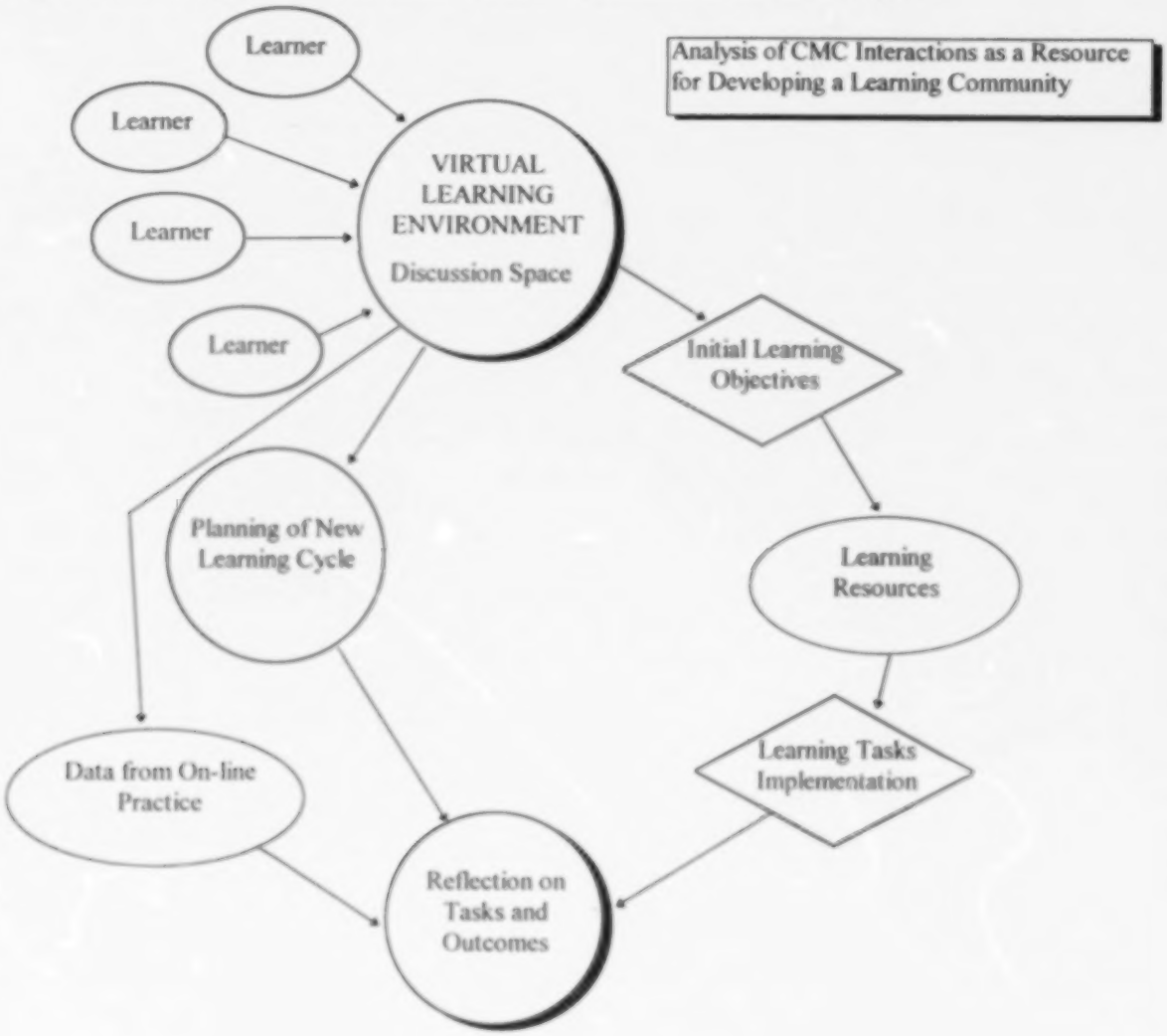
In the case of potential communities primarily focused on learning activities, learning tasks and resources will serve as significant structures around which community can be developed, and in relation to these specific questions need to be addressed, particularly:
is the group engaged in the productions of shared knowledge about its domain of interest ?
as opposed to creating a shared social culture - however valuable that might be as a support for individual learning;
does the group cultivate a sense of its own learning process?
in other words, does its collective memory encompass the learning that has been manifested in individual contributions.

Paccagnella (1997), following from Baym's analysis, argues that only a naturalistic and longitudinal approach is adequate

> to discover and understand the dynamic and the slow evolution of the specific culture and social climate of a particular piece of cyberspace. There is therefore need for future research - that, besides being conducted in the field and not in laboratory conditions, is also longitudinal.

and that for naturalistic analysis of on-line material, the software-embedded tools are an essential resource, since they avoid the interventionism inherent in both survey and participant observer approaches. Adopting Weberian terminology, he proposes that the software tools carry the function of explication (Erklaren) leaving the complementary interpretation (Verstehen) to the researcher.
The Verstehen for a collaborative learning group, however, could also be construed as individual and collective reflective activity. The diagram below illustrates how data on interactions can contribute to a cycle of collective experiential learning.

Diagram 1: Investigation of CMC transcript as a contribution to the learning cycle



The Place of Aggregative Approaches in Investigating Learning Community

Appraising embedded information in CMC transcripts from the perspective of collaborative learning, Guzdial (1997) proposes that aggregative date can provide a kind of ecological profile of a learning forum, which allows the investigator to observe whether some of the pre-conditions of collective learning are being met and which because of the relevant ease of gathering the data can be used as a formative evaluation tool.

An example relevant to the theme of community development would be the 'recency' effect observed in Web-based communication whereby on-line messages are perceived as having a very short effective life, after which they no longer attract responses, almost irrespective of content. If we are concerned with community behaviour as a process of aggregation and accumulation, we might wish to investigate the time-span over which messages are responded to within our learning group , and if a recency effect is seen to be occurring to the detriment of continuity and accumulation of meaning, to consider ways of designing the on-line environment or managing online interaction to counter it in the interests of community development.

Investigating those activities identified earlier as crucial for a learning community - collaborative knowledge generation and the collective monitoring of the learning process - would involve extending the comparative ecological top a variety of levels of investigation, encompassing smaller entities in the learning environment. To investigate, for example, inter-topic and inter-message relationships within a single discussion area, some finer-grained approaches such as network representations or content analysis may be helpful. Although not embedded in the CMC environment, these may be software facilitated.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a taxonomy of investigation options, the table below gives some examples of investigation at different levels of granularity. Each level of description provides different types of material for an interpretative activity, which may take place within the discussion area, as a contribution to the cultivation of the learning culture. (Example 4 below shows this happening informally.)

Table 1 - Fields of enquiry, types of evidence and issues for co-operative reflection

FIELD OF ENQUIRY	TYPES OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT	ISSUES RAISED FOR COOPERATIVE REFLECTION
Whole CMC environment	relative patterns of use for areas of different functionality: topics initiated, pace and quantity of interactions	How have different discussion areas contributed to learning/?
Single discussion area	topics instituted in relation to function of the discussion area. Activity of individual participants: frequency and types of response (substantive, social, etc).	How have patterns of use, and focus of concerns over time shifted? What roles have been adopted by different members of the group, and in what contexts?
Single content-focused discussion strand	variety of contributors, sequencing of contributions, focus of message subjects; occurrence of common concepts, semantic patterns	What common learning concerns are being shared? How are meanings being negotiated?
Single process-focused discussion strand	as previous level - plus explicit reflections on other messages and discussion process	What collective insights have been gained from the discussion? How are these preserved and developed?

Contextualising Interpretation for the Learning Community Context

Only a few brief examples of these different levels of investigation can be illustrated here from the discussion data.

Example 1: Overview of a differentiated CMC environment

The transcript under consideration consists of over 1400 messages posted to whole group discussion areas by a cohort of twenty-one part-time Master's students and five course team members, as contributions to topic strands initiated over the fist six months of their course. Just over half of these were in the 'general purpose' area; the remainder spread across a library and resource a technical support area, and an additional social area set up to bring together both cohorts on the course. Much discussion also took place in small closed groups ('learning sets') where the focus was on learning

issues, projects and collaborative assessments, but we focus here on the potential community as a whole. (The design of the overall learning environment and its motivation are detailed in Graebner, 1998.)

Table 2: Overall volume of postings to 4 open discussion areas over 6 months

General Discussion Forum	Technical Support	Library & Resources	Social Area
733	308	113	268

Where there are plural and differentiated community spaces an aggregative view can begin to characterise the ecology of different spaces, and can raise questions about shifts over time. The example below compares the rate at which new themes were introduced into the different discussion areas, and also illustrates the number of dimensions in the data which may need to be investigated; in this case an overall trend to longer time-spans and more inclusive strands, as well as changes of balance between whole group and the subgroup areas of activity seasonal underlie the general decrease in new topics.

Table 3: New topics in discussion areas by month

General Discussion Forum	Technical Support	Library & Resources	Social Area
F. 13	15	9	14
M. 6	9	3	1
A. 10	4	5	3
M. 5	1	3	1
J. 2	0	1	1
J. 4	3	0	0

Example 2: Evolution of a single discussion area - the Technical Support forum
This was the area set up to address immediate concerns about use of working environment and report problems. As the space where success with setting up the communications software was to be reported, it was ensured broad initial participation. Half of the course cohort originated topics in this area over the six month period.

The area had a resident expert who was also the system administrator for the conferencing software. Of the 15 new discussion threads in the 1st month of use, 5 were initiated by the resident expert. However, all subsequent topics were initiated by students - or occasionally tutors. Most of these (17 out of 27) were requests for clarification, or worries about malfunctions. In other ways, the discussion went beyond a simple technical 'question and answer ' pattern:

> although new topics in the first six weeks were largely reactive, subsequently a new type of strand began to appear - raising 'what if' issues about the software environment, including enhanced or alternative uses (7 topics);
>
> there were also some (self-consciously) stereotypical roles being played out from very early on: the naive user, the Luddite, the Macintosh (or PC) partisan.

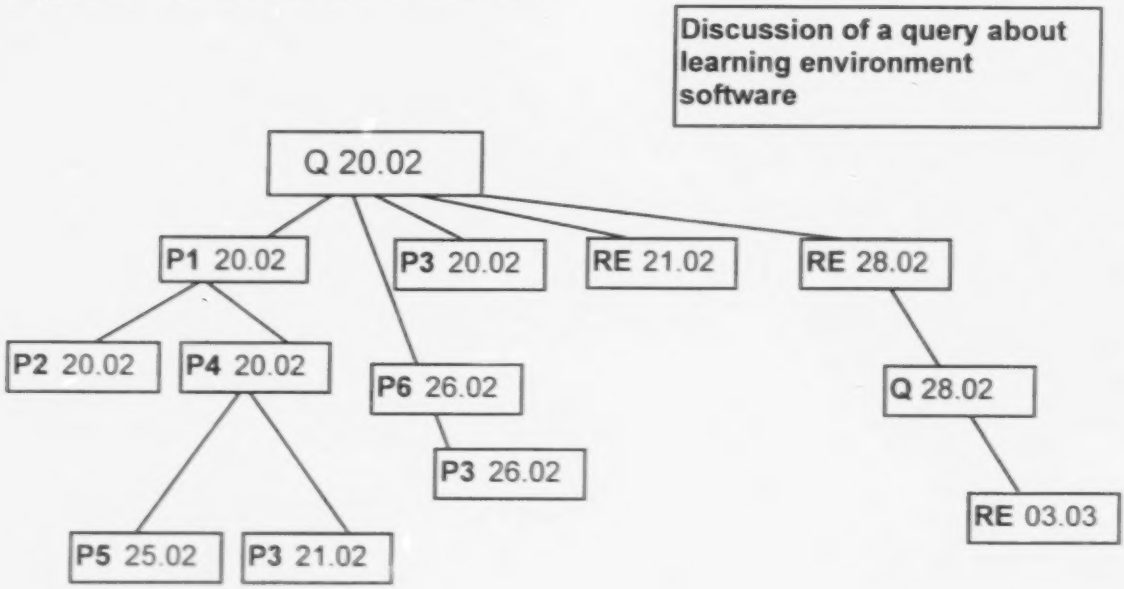
Overall, this practically focused area seems to have provided a strong initial base for co-operative interaction.

Example 3: a single content-focused discussion strand

The network below represents a single discussion strand which begins four weeks into the on-line period and runs for eleven days, spanning thirteen messages. Within the pattern of interaction discussed for the whole area, a group member is seeking an explanation of a feature of the Notes software. Like many discussion environments, Notes helps users to manage the flow of information by providing visual marking of unread messages; but in some cases this seems to the user to be applied inconsistently.

Q is the initial questioner, P*n* other course group members, RE the resident expert; course tutors are represented as T.

Diagram 2: Content-focused discussion thread

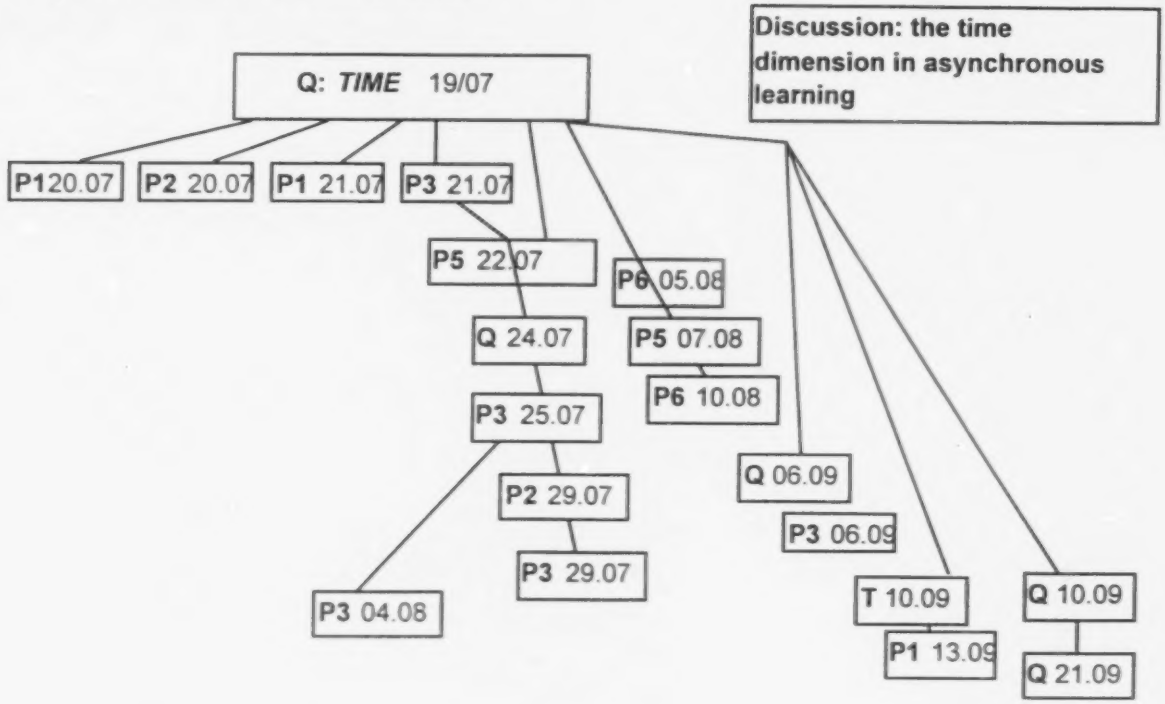


The right hand branch of this thread shows a linear interaction of a 'Q and A' pattern between enquirer and expert, typical for technical support interactions on-line: RE's first explanation - Q's observations on its goodness of fit - RE's acknowledgement of the observations. But in the interim, peers are offering a variety of responses in different roles - supportive ('me too'), explanatory hypotheses, and general banter. In his first posting, the expert acknowledges the contribution this sharing of ideas has made to his conception of the problem; although he takes responsibility for a final (though partial)solution, the co-operative input has been very significant.

Example 4: a single process-focused discussion strand

This last example illustrates the use of a general discussion area as a space for reflection on community process. As often in a process-oriented strand, the initiating message takes the form of a request for opinions, referring back to the author's summary of a previous more general discussion thread:

Diagram 3: Reflective discussion thread



The posting attracts immediate responses from three course members; although the breadth of response is not great, the discussion continues over eight or nine weeks. The most vigorous chain of responses actually represents the spinning of a collective fantasy about virtual versions of a real-time experience, a direction tangential but by no means irrelevant to the main theme; and it would seem to be a measure of the maturing of this community that perspectives from this playful 'digression' are taken up in the general reflections on the separation between on-line and off-line realms of experience which follow them, thus contributing to the collective self-knowledge of the group.

Issues Raised by the Illustrations

The examples of interactions depicted here have been taken up in retrospect.

Since the cycle of learning from on-line experience cannot be considered complete until interpretations of on-line patterns of activity are taken to the group for reflection, a more productive approach to learning from past interactions could be for a community to adopt a more integrated and timely interpretation process for itself. However, the practical and ethical demands of such an approach would be very considerable, and there is arguably a continuing role for the reseracher as initial and tentative chronicler of on-line social realities.

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Teaching managers how to learn: the changing role of management educators

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Context

Until the 1960`s, Management education in the U.K. was disparate. Management was taught at a number of Universities usually as an adjunct to mainstream programmes of study. Management or industrial administration formed part of the syllabus of some professional bodies. In sharp contrast, in the United States, Management had long been a distinctive discipline within graduate Business Schools.

This pattern was to change significantly during the 1960`s, with the establishment of British Business Schools and the Masters` degree in Business Administration (MBA), which has grown rapidly since. It is now offered in over a hundred Schools with 8,000 graduates annually. (Golzen, 1997: 1). The MBA approach, aimed at increasing a manager's ability to take good strategic decisions was not paralleled in other management teaching. Professional bodies, whilst recognising new techniques, were unresponsive to new philosophies of management, current research and different methods of teaching and learning, such as case study analysis.

During the 1980`s the continuing debate about how much management education contributed to the development of effective managers resulted in two reports (Constable and McCormick, 1987; Handy, 1987) and the establishment of the Management Charter Initiative (MCI), an employer-led body which developed competence-based standards for managers from supervisory to senior level. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ`s) derived from these standards have, since 1990, transformed the traditional approach to teaching management on professional programmes. Knowledge and Understanding and Competence-based programmes, have been influenced by the standards (MCI, 1991; 1997).

Professional programmes of study have traditionally been located within Further Education rather than Universities. The creation of Universities from Polytechnics and Higher Education developments in Colleges of Further Education have tended to blur the distinction. Nonetheless, a divide is still apparent. Of 155 registered Institute of Management centres in 1997, only 12 were Universities. Of these, only 5 were in the `old` Universities (Institute of Management, 1997a).

This sectoral divide has implications for the type of programmes being delivered and research, programme design and delivery. Since the incorporation of Further Education Colleges in 1993, funding has been cut sharply and staff reduced by 15,000 (Midgley, 1998; Mackney, 1998). This has resulted in a reduction in guided learning hours for programmes, more part-time staff and increased class contact time for remaining full-time members of staff. Opportunities for research or other scholarly activity have consequently diminished.

Research questions

The connections between research, teaching and learning in professional management education programmes were explored against this background. Guiding questions included:

Is there a divide between research findings, teaching and learning and workplace practices?
To what extent are subject discipline research, up to date subject knowledge and understanding of workplace practice critical to the effective facilitation of learning?
Does a shift in the role of management educator from functional expert to facilitator, tutor and coach enable managers to manage more effectively?

Methodology

A qualitative design was used with documentary analysis and observation as its primary methodological tools. Three topic areas were chosen as examples to reflect both techniques and orientations: appraisal, motivation and the management of change. Literature reviews were carried out to establish current research findings and theoretical developments. The Management Standards (MCI, 1997) and three Awarding Bodies syllabuses (NEBSM, 1997; IPD, 1997; IM, 1997b) were examined at four levels to identify learning outcomes. Professional programmes from ten institutions were scrutinised for insights into content and learning strategies. Assignments, reading lists, examinations and examiners` and verifiers` reports were studied. Students at one institution were questioned formally and informally about existing workplace practices. Both authors carried out observations as tutors, lecturers, programme managers, internal and external verifiers and researchers and discussed issues with practitioners. Multiple data sources and member checks were employed to verify the trustworthiness of the data.

Findings

Findings are presented for the three topic areas in terms of current research, teaching and learning and contemporary workplace practice.

Appraisal

Formal appraisal systems began in the United States in the 1920`s. Research since the late 1950`s has shown that appraisals linked to pay were unhelpful and best separated (Meyer and others 1965; Geary, 1992; Robinson, 1992; O`Neill, 1995).

Appraisal methods and remuneration have received considerable discussion in the past decade. (Cumming, 1998; Schuster and Zingheim, 1992; Kessler and Purcell, 1993; O`Neill, 1995; Brown, 1995). The assessment of efficiency and effectiveness and jobs without readily identifiable units of output are recognised as difficulties. Payment by results is influenced by bias, inaccuracy and variables outside the control of the individual and creates demotivation. (Oliver, 1996). Studies have found that appraisal or performance related pay impaired the chances of securing the commitment of poor performers. (Institute of Manpower Studies, 1993).

Financial constraints may also thwart worker expectations. No evidence currently exists from any controlled study in the U.K. or U.S.A. to show that long-term improvements in the quality of performance results from appraisal based extrinsic awards. Although much literature has discussed fundamental weaknesses in many appraisal systems, it has also shown that performance appraisal may prove to be an important factor in changing and improving organisational culture (Koopman, 1991; Walters, 1995).

The complex relationships between performance, appraisal and reward are not specifically addressed within either awarding body syllabuses or supporting documentation. The word `appraisal` does not appear in the key words and concepts of the management standards (MCI, 1997).

Appraisal interviews, framework and skills appear at supervisory management level (NEBSM 1997) and the basic ingredients essential to the effective design and operation of performance review and appraisal systems in a Certificate syllabus (IPD 1997). The Institute of Management (1997) Diploma syllabuses make no explicit reference to appraisal in the context of either assessment or development. Despite the absence of specific guidance, many centres do explore issues in current research. The role of appraisal in both performance management and staff development is frequently covered together with discussion about the problems which dual-purpose schemes generate. The focus of appraisals (on character traits, behaviour or performance outcomes) receives consideration in core texts such as Marchington and Wilkinson, (1996) as do recent developments like 360 degree appraisals. The emphasis at lower levels is on skills and techniques; at higher levels the problems associated with appraisal schemes are adequately ventilated.

Formal appraisal systems are widespread among our student sample. Most appraisals are carried out by line managers on individuals. Self-appraisal forms part of the process in most organisations, but peer appraisal, 360 degree appraisal and team appraisal are rare. Many systems are driven by Investors in People initiatives, yet there is little evidence of formal training of appraisers nor of formal guidance to appraisees. In most organisations appraisal is part of a performance management system, although training needs analysis is the most frequently cited function of appraisal. Appraisal is perceived almost universally as a control mechanism which is both subjective and inconsistent and, in the worst cases, leads to fear and demotivation. Where appraisal is associated with rewards these tendencies are exacerbated. Often, appraisals have multiple functions which do not lie easily together. This leads to mistrust and scepticism, undermines confidence and inhibits commitment. The full potential of appraisal systems for enhancing individual development and increasing organisational learning is rarely achieved.

Motivation

Motivation has long been a central focus of management literature. Many of the themes identified by the human relations school in the 1960`s are still currently debated including the psychological contract (Guest and Conway, 1997), employee involvement (Haasen and Shea, 1997), recognition (Boyle, 1995), managing creativity (Amabile, 1997), empowerment (Beach, 1996), leadership (Gilley, 1997; Morden, 1997) and incentives (Bryant, 1996). Recent contributions emphasise process theories of motivation such as expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) rather than content theories with underlying assumptions of universality. Some research has focused on international motivational differences (Herbig and Genestre, 1997) and on developments in organisational learning (Pearn and others, 1995). Beliefs about human motivation define organisational tone and culture, underpin reward strategies and create conditions which determine individual and group performance and achievement of organisational objectives.

Awarding body syllabuses refer to goal setting, individual differences, major theories of motivation, recognition and reward. There is ample coverage of both theoretical and practical issues in recommended texts which reflects current debates. The impact of `the human relations school` is evident in the approach to much teaching of motivation on professional programmes. Yet, there is a tendency to emphasise content rather than process theories and to focus on the simple and universal rather than the complex and contingent. Maslow`s hierarchy of needs (1943) and Herzberg`s motivator/hygiene theory (1966) have been the mainstay of programmes in organisational behaviour for three decades. It is interesting that a modern Social Psychology text on Human Motivation (Weiner, 1992) contains no reference to either. Motivation may be taught with enthusiasm, yet it is often taught uncritically. Reliance on a firm body of established work often fails to contextualise the topic in a world of shifting lifestyles and organisational change where downsizing, outsourcing and casualisation create new motivational contexts for employees. Sustainable reward strategies based on established theories of motivation are rarely fully explored.

Three decades of human relations teaching may have resulted in humanistic concepts of motivation becoming the espoused theory of management tutors. Its impact upon the workplace practices experienced by our student sample is negligible. In this area of management education the greatest gulf between teaching and contemporary practice can be seen. Students are sensitised to what they see as poor motivational practices, but discounting this enthusiasm, we still have clear instances of ill-considered performance-related pay schemes, successive rounds of redundancies, increased work loads, autocratic management, stifled creativity, short term and temporary contracts, social isolation and an increasing loss of control over the flow and pace of work. Few organisations have a theory in use which reflects the classroom views on motivation, nor are there any simple formulae to reconcile the often conflicting goals of organisations and individuals. Our student sample consists largely of highly motivated adult learners in management positions. They are frequently frustrated in their efforts to perform by organisational constraints. These same constraints also serve to prevent them from allowing their own team members freedom to fulfil their own ambitions.

The management of change

Change has been a concern of organisation theorists for many years. It was the rapid social changes of the industrial revolution which gave birth to the discipline of sociology through the work of Marx, Durkheim, Comte and Weber. It has been a recurrent theme from the days of scientific management to those of the learning organisation. Change features in the popular writings of management gurus such as Handy, Peters and Kanter. Current research focuses on tools and techniques (Belbin, 1997; Tushman and O`Reilly III, 1997) on case studies of organisational change (University of Warwick, 1997; Zell, 1997) and on strategic change (Carnall, 1997; Tyson, 1998).

There is less emphasis on emergent models of change, more prevalent in other fields of sociology. Some authors, however, do challenge the dominant paradigm of unitarism and planned change with models which are pluralistic and emergent (Schein, 1985; Ruddle and Feeny, 1997).

If the management literature on change is heavily skewed towards the tools and techniques of planned change, then this tendency is heightened in approaches to teaching change management. The management standards are essentially normative with performance criteria such as `you achieve the results you anticipate from the changes within agreed timescales`. (MCI, 1997 A5.5f). This is reflected in the awarding body syllabuses, which refer to:- responses to change, gaining acceptance, handling conflict and overcoming resistance and in lesson plans, assignments, examinations and core texts (Johnson and Scholes, 1996; Financial Times, 1997). It is perhaps because Organisation Theory has become the province of Business Schools rather than a sub-discipline of Sociology that this approach has remained largely unchallenged in professional programmes.

Workplace practice in change management also follows the dominant paradigm reflected in both research and teaching. There is, despite often compelling evidence to the contrary, an almost universal conviction that managers should and can initiate and implement change. Approaches range along the tell/consult continuum and techniques employed vary in sophistication and modernity. Changes such as Total Quality Management, Investors in People, Manufacturing Resource Planning, annualised hours, harmonisation of conditions, redundancy programmes and radical restructuring have been implemented in the organisations of our student sample. Without exception the change programmes have been management driven. Rarely, in the experience of the respondents, has sufficient attention been paid to the dysfunctions of prescriptive change through the anticipation of forces resistant to change.

Conclusions

Our findings show a clear divide between research, teaching and learning and workplace practices. The nature of the divide is dependent on the area of study. In areas which focus on the development and application of management techniques there is an alignment between research and workplace practices, not reflected in teaching and learning. In more theoretical areas like motivation there is a congruency between research and teaching which does not permeate through to workplace practices. In routine areas neither teaching nor workplace practices may be influenced by research findings. In the workplace in particular this continues rather that abates.

This has profound implications for the role of the educator on professional management programmes. Subject discipline research is often too narrow to be of significant value to existing programmes. Up to date subject knowledge and an understanding of workplace practice is clearly essential if the divide is to be narrowed. Facilitation of learning, however, requires much more than functional expertise. As management knowledge expands, it becomes increasingly difficult for educators to have both the breadth and depth of knowledge which their students may need. Consequently, the role must shift to one where the tutor develops skills of facilitation, coaching and mentoring to enable individual students or groups of students to learn. At some centres, student-centred learning, action learning sets, open learning facilities and information technology provide a framework in which this may be achieved. Assignments which combine theoretical orientations with best practice approaches and workplace applications can provide learning opportunities which fulfil individual needs within the framework of awarding body requirements.

This approach can also provide learning and development for tutors, who, through student assignment work, maintain up to date knowledge of both research and workplace practice. The change of role suggests an emphasis on different skills. Although knowledge of the terrain remains essential, subject knowledge and the pedagogic skills associated with representational teaching diminish in importance. Knowledge of research methods, consultancy skills and information sources becomes of critical importance and skills of facilitating individual and group learning of adults become paramount. It is here where perhaps the focus of research might be and where scholarly activity might best be concentrated

Improvements in developing the ability of managers to learn and manage their own learning has much greater leverage than any amount of taught knowledge. Individuals have differing learning needs which cannot be satisfied through a focus on teaching.

These arguments have wider implications for institutions, awarding bodies and funding councils. There is a need to recognise that traditional teaching is not the only way in which learning takes place and to encourage innovative ways of facilitating the learning of adults through appropriate funding. In the area of management education there is also a need for government to move away from channelling the majority of funding to competence and practitioner programmes and to achieve a balance with more academic content.

Finally, there has to be a recognition that many organisation cultures modify the impact of teaching and learning. There are strong indications to suggest that many organisations favour the pragmatic, short term approach and have a tendency to marginalise the academic approach. Research is all too often discounted in favour of quick fix solutions.

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Becoming expert: using ethnographies of everyday learning to inform the education of adults

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> *I wasn't exactly an academic. But I had plenty of time on my hands and used a medical dictionary.... Within a couple of months I'd got about a dozen books on the go. One title led to another and I just kept asking the library to order more. I read the same books over and over again, upside down and back to front and even dreamt about them.*
> Kevin Callan, jailed for the murder of a three year old child and later acquitted having organized his own appeal. Guardian, 7 April 1995.

Introduction

What motivates people to learn? This paper will introduce an ethnographic framework for thinking about multiple ways of knowing, and a way of researching everyday learning and literacy use among adults. It will exemplify this approach by referring to a study of literacy practices in one community in the North West of England (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). The aim of the paper is to link the literacy learning that goes on in and out of educational settings and to encourage us as researchers, teachers, learners and users of literacy to reflect on our own practices as part of this process. The approach I will describe is complementary to more cognitively-oriented work on the informal processes of situated learning and their relationship with formal education (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Nunes, 1993; Reder 1994). It is an integrative approach to research, teaching and learning in the field of literacy in several senses:

* it links the individual and the social context

* it links research, theory and practice through encouraging us to take a reflexive stance toward literacy and learning

* it considers literacy alongside other media, suggesting a common theoretical framework

* it offers a way of thinking about the relationship between learning inside and beyond formal education.

I approach literacy from the lifelong learning perspective of teaching adults with literacy difficulties. Increasingly I can see important links between this work and social anthropology, media and cultural studies which share a common interest in understanding the literacy lives that exist beyond educational institutions.

Theoretical and methodological framework

The theoretical framework is developed in Barton and Hamilton, 1988. It draws on the work of Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981); Shirley Heath (1983) and Brian Street (1984) among others. It characterises literacy as part of social practices which are observable in literacy "events" or "moments" and are patterned by social institutions and power relationships. The notion of "social practice" is a key theoretical tool within recent social theory (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990; Smith, 1993; Thompson, 1995) that enables us to explain the links between human agency and social structures. This concept helps us account for both consistency and change in social processes, and to connect material things, signs, activities and experience (subjectivities). Social practices include the following elements:

participants: the people who interact with the written texts; who are involved in the social relationships of producing, interpreting, circulating and otherwise regulating written texts
activities: the actions performed by participants in literacy events; structured routines and pathways that facilitate or regulate actions; intentional strategies; rules of appropriacy and eligibility - who does/doesn't, can/can't engage in particular activities
settings: the immediate physical and temporal circumstances in which an interaction takes place
domains or institutional spaces: the field of social or institutional practice within which events takes place and from which they take their sense and social purpose
resources: the material artefacts, tools and accessories that are involved in the interaction (including the texts); all the other resources brought to the literacy practice including non-material values, understandings, ways of thinking, feeling, technical skills and knowledge; beliefs; representational (semiotic) resources

Viewing literacy as part of social practice shifts the research focus away from isolated individuals and texts, from deficits, from cognitive skills towards social relationships, communal resources, historical traditions and change. It enables us to look outwards from educational practices, to the many other everyday contexts in which literacy is learned and used. A social theory of literacy as contextualised in time and space implies the use of certain research methods. Methods which take literacy out of its context of use are not appropriate. The research goal becomes one of uncovering patterns and regularities in the organisation of one aspect of cultural life. Research methods are needed which enable us to examine in detail the role of literacy in people's contemporary lives and in the histories and traditions of which these are a part, and which explore some of the contemporary environments in which people are carrying out their everyday lives.

The notion of the "literacy event", associated with Shirley Heath (1983) and akin to sociolinguistic notions of the speech event, is key to the empirical investigation of literacy practices.

In terms of methodology, such research draws upon ethnographic research traditions, which have four characteristics of particular interest. Firstly, ethnography studies real-world settings, typically by focusing on a particular location and point in time. Secondly, the approach is holistic, aiming at whole phenomena, in this case, the cultural practice of literacy. Thirdly, the work is multi-method, drawing on a variety of research techniques - combining, for example, extensive interviewing with detailed observation and the systematic collection of documents. Fourthly, ethnography is interpretative and aims to represent the participants' perspectives

Data

The Literacy in the Community project was a detailed study of the role of literacy in the everyday lives of people in Lancaster, England, and is reported in Barton & Hamilton 1998 and elsewhere. The project lasted several years and used in-depth interviews, complemented by observations, photography and the collection of documents and records. It included a door-to-door survey in one neighbourhood of Lancaster and detailed case studies of people in twelve households in the neighbourhood, observing particular literacy events, and asking people to reflect on their practices. Alongside the case studies were thirty interviews of people in what we called access points for literacy, such as book-shops, libraries and advice centres. There were also interviews of twenty adults who had identified problems with their reading and writing and had been attending courses at the Adult College.

Dominant (institutional) and vernacular literacies

One of the main organizing ideas that we used in this study was a distinction between dominant and vernacular literacies. We defined *dominant* literacies as those which are privileged by their association with formal organisations, such as those of the school, the church the work-place, the legal system, commerce, medical and welfare bureaucracies. They are part of the specialised discourses of bounded communities of practice, and are standardised and defined in terms of the

formal purposes of the institution, rather than in terms of the multiple and shifting purposes of individual citizens and their communities. In dominant literacies there are professional experts and teachers through whom access to knowledge is controlled. To the extent that we can group these dominant literacies together, they are given high value, legally and culturally. Dominant literacies are powerful in proportion to the power of the institution that shapes them.

Vernacular literacies are essentially ones which are not regulated or systematised by the formal rules and procedures of social institutions but have their origin in the purposes of everyday life. They are not highly valued by formal social institutions though sometimes they develop in response to these institutions. They may be actively disapproved of and they can be contrasted with dominant literacies which are seen as rational, and of high cultural value. They are more common in private spheres than in public spheres. Often they are humorous, playful, disrespectful, sometimes deliberately oppositional. When questioned about them, people did not always regard them as *real* reading or *real* writing.

Some vernacular literacies are hidden. This includes those which are personal and private, where reading or writing are ways of being alone and private, ways of creating personal space. There are also secret notes and letters of love, abuse, criticism and subversion. *Under the table*, to use Janet Maybin's (1996) phrase, we also found comics, horoscopes, fanzines, scurrilous jokes, pornography. And, while some private spheres were shared with us as researchers, we were not offered access to all people's private practices.

In our project we found vernacular literacies involved in a range of everyday activities, which we roughly classified as (1) *organising life (2) personal communication (3) private leisure (4) documenting life (5) sense making* and (6) *social participation*. In all of these areas, we found examples of people becoming expert, consciously carrying out their own research on a topic of interest to them.

Some examples of vernacular literacies and ways of becoming expert

Many of the people we interviewed had experienced situations in their day-to-day life that had motivated them to develop a specialised expertise and launched them into a new area of learning in which they mustered all the resources they could find, including literacy. Often these activities involve encounters with social institutions, dealing with professionals, ways of communicating, acting and understanding that are quite alien to peoples previous experience. To interact with these institutions and to have access to the knowledge they control, literacy is a key tool.

In the simplest sense this involves reading instruction booklets and guarantees for household items to see how they are used or for effecting repairs. It can also include devotional reading of religious and other inspirational books, and deliberate investigations of unknown topics whether to do with an illness, their child's difficulties at school or a legal or consumer grievance. There were a number of examples in our data related to *ill health* where people became expert in the treatment and understanding of particular ailments.

There were encounters with schools, where *parents* were acting on behalf of their children and dealing with systems which they found quite mystifying and opaque. Their efforts to obtain resources for their children were often frustrating and consumed a great deal of their time and energy. We have examples of more and less successful advocacy by parents, in terms of obtaining special help for their children, or exercising their right to choose their child's school.

People frequently confront *employment-related* problems. These include searching for and applying for jobs, dealing with official bureaucracy when registering as unemployed, claiming welfare benefit entitlements or tax refunds; and setting up small businesses. Another common group of practical problems are *legal problems* and encounters with the police, courts and insurance companies. A variety of legal problems arise for individuals at different stages of their lives, and sometimes more

general issues affect large groups of people, as in disputes over land ownership and use. In these cases, people may act together to pool resources and develop new kinds of expertise.

As well as these short-term responses to urgent practical needs, people have pre-occupations and pastimes which they pursue over lengthy periods: quests for information about family history, correspondences and leisure activities of various sorts. These leads to a wide variation in what people know about, and it is revealing to look across a community to investigate the types of vernacular knowledge which exist.

Characteristics of vernacular literacies

A number of points can be made about the nature of vernacular literacies based on the data from this study.

Firstly, vernacular literacy practices are learned informally. They are acquired in homes and neighbourhood groups, through the everyday perplexities and curiosities of our lives. The roles of novice or learner and expert or teacher are not fixed, but shift from context to context and there is an acceptance that people will engage in vernacular literacies in different ways, sometimes supporting, sometimes requiring support from others.

Secondly, the vernacular literacy practices we identified are rooted in action contexts and everyday purposes and networks. They draw upon and contribute to vernacular knowledge, which is often local, procedural and minutely detailed. Literacy learning and use are integrated in everyday activities and the literacy elements are an implicit part of the activity, which may be mastering a martial art, paying the bills, or finding out about local news. Literacy itself is not a focus of attention, but is used to get other things done. Everyday literacies are subservient to the goals of purposeful activities and are defined by people in terms of these activities.

Where specialisms develop in everyday contexts they are different from the formal academic disciplines, reflecting the logic of practical application. Vernacular literacies are as diverse as social practices are. They are hybrid in origin and often it is clear that a particular activity may be classified in more than one way since people may have a mixture of motives for taking part in a given literacy activity. Preparing a residents association newsletter, for instance, can be a social activity, it can be part of leisure or political activity, and it may involve personal sense-making.

This is in contrast to many educational practices, where learning is separated from use, divided up into academically defined subject areas, disciplines and specialisms, and where knowledge is often made explicit within particular interactive routines, is reflected upon, and is open to evaluation through the testing of disembedded skills. Formal literacy learning in these ways produces a distinctive *schooled literacy*.

The integration of vernacular literacy practices in everyday activity and concerns leads to other kinds of embedding: in literacy events written and spoken language are often integrated. Print and other media are integrated; literacy is integrated with other symbolic systems, such as numeracy, and visual semiotics. Different topics and activities can occur together, making it hard to perceive the boundaries of a single literacy event or practice.

Making connections

In summary, what are the implications of this approach to literacy for integrating research, teaching and learning? The approach encourages us to make connections in several important areas:

The Community Connection

The areas of vernacular knowledge described here can be compared with those which Luis Moll identifies in his research with Mexican-American households in the United States. Moll (1994) refers to *funds of knowledge* in communities which are the practical exchanges and responses to needs for information and resources shared across families, between siblings, neighbours, friends. Moll

found funds of knowledge in areas such as agriculture, economics, construction, religion, arts and repair. In Lancaster the areas of vernacular knowledge which we have identified include home economics and budgeting, repair and maintenance, child care and health, gardening, cooking, pets and animal care, and family and local history. Some people had also developed knowledge of legal and medical topics.

Whilst these funds exist, they also have their limitations and can be supported by various kinds of educational response. A social practice approach to literacy demonstrates the changing demands that people experience at different stages of their lives and offers convincing evidence of the need for lifelong learning systems which people can access at critical points. When talking about educational responses we are not just thinking about schools, but much more widely about a range of institutional contexts for literacy, including community education, workplaces, libraries and advice centres, all the points in the web that help sustain a culture of literacy. Additional ways of supporting groups as well as individuals can also be explored.

The learning connection: situated practice

Within communities technical literacy skills are distributed and people may participate in literacy practices in many different ways. This links directly into the traditions that have developed from activity theory where learning is seen in terms of an apprentice-like relationship between expert and novice. However, what counts as "expert" and what is "novice" is problematic outside of an institutional setting. People move flexibly in and out of being "learners" in different roles, notions of exchange and identity are strongly linked. The notion of apprenticeship does not fit all situations and we need a more fluid conceptualisation of the relationships experienced outside of institutional settings. Much more thought needs to be given to the nature of lay expertise and its relationship to identity and professional knowledge.

Stephen Reder's notion of *practice engagement theory* (Reder 1994) may point a way toward this more fluid characterisation. He identifies three aspects of literacy practices: *technology, function,* and *social meaning and suggest* that people may engage with any or all of these three aspects in shifting - and often unequal - ways.

The institutional power connection

Literacies are embedded in social relationships that give them their meaning. Vernacular literacies are defined in relation to dominant, legitimated practices. The fact that some literacies are supported and legitimated by powerful institutions implies that others are de-valued. Many of the literacies that are influential and valued in people's day-to-day lives, that are widely circulated and discussed are also ignored culturally: they do not count as "real" literacy. Neither are the informal social networks which sustain these literacies drawn upon or acknowledged.

Attention needs to be paid to the social relationships which frame literacy in colleges, classrooms and other settings where adults learn, and the power dimensions of these relationships in terms of the ability to make decisions, confer value, demonstrate expertise.

The media connection: print literacy and other media

Our findings show that other media besides print literacy have a very important influence in contemporary life as a source of knowledge, communication and representations of reality. They are used interchangeably with literacy in many peoples' lives to achieve particular goals, such as communication and finding out information. In their everyday lives people move unconsciously between media and many people do not privilege literacy, but evaluate its worth in relation to available alternatives. This supports notions of teaching and assessing literacy in the context of other media and exploring the ways in which these other media are structured and their meanings in people's lives. In general, a social approach de-emphasises the differences between speech, writing and other, non-verbal means of expression. It supports not only critical language awareness, but also critical awareness of other semiotic systems and the possibilities for their use.

The personal connection: developing reflective partnerships

An important contribution of the social practice approach to literacy is that it enables all of us, within and beyond education to appreciate the variety and creativity of everyday literacy practices, to question received wisdom about literacy and encourages us to find out more about practices in other settings and to devise educational responses to these growing understandings.

We have used this approach in courses of professional development, where students can be asked to explore the literacy practices of a domain of their choice (see Barton,1997). The Connect Family literacy project in Edinburgh has encouraged teachers and parents to co-research home practices and use the information to inform curricula for family literacy courses (see Keen, 1995). In London Nora Hughes took Mukul Saxena's (1994) description of the literacy practices of members of the Panjabi-speaking community in Southall and used it to design a set of activities for her ESOL classes, transforming her students into ethnographers who researched their own communities (Hughes, 1992). Susie Parr has adapted this approach in her work with stroke patients suffering from aphasia (Parr 1995).

A social practice approach to literacy argues for the importance of self-consciously researching local culture and perspectives on literacy and building this knowledge into learning programmes, using it as a basis for discussion and investigation of literacy issues with learners. This does not necessarily mean incorporating vernacular literacies into formal teaching by directly using or modeling them in formal educational settings since this inevitably recontexualises them and thus changes their meaning. The basic issue is acknowledging and respecting the existence of vernacular practices, understanding that educational practices are not the only literacy practices. Rather they are a specialised and powerful set of practices which may complement and enhance the practices of home and community, but which are also capable of violating or devaluing them.

Students of all ages, adults and children, are involved with a whole set of everyday cultural practices, which they engage with other people significant to them in family and friendship groups. Many teachers have limited opportunities to get to know about these practices, especially where students belong to a culture very different from their own. As teachers and researchers we need to find ways of developing reflective partnerships which can mediate between homes, communities, and adult education programmes enhancing people's sense of their own expertise and authorship, to helping them take control of available literacies and put them to work to benefit themselves and their communities.

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The fact and (moral) value distinction in adult education work intentionally targeting social exclusion

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> ... *citizens cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone.*
> *Cultivating Humanity.* Martha C. Nussbaum

Introduction.

Clark Kerr, in a book published in 1972 said that in our era the university has turned into a multiversity, characterised as 'a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking'. Kerr refers to the university's 'identity crisis'. Others have said the university is fast becoming a 'service station' catering for both teaching and research to the immediate practical needs of the paying client. Aviram (1992) says that the universities are 'losing the faith in an independent educational or intellectual mission transcending the immediate and the narrowly practical and uniting the different faculties'. Institutional facts depend on the coherence of **the university's collective intent**. When this is not there then there can be no special value given to adult education work fighting social exclusion.

This places the problems of evaluating current adult education work not on the distinctions of logic and not in the adult education work itself but in the changing identity of the university. The lessons of the last 15 years of the Access movement have been that excellence in academic standards need not mean side-stepping questions of equality and fair distribution of opportunity.

The eighties were an indication of things to come. In 1992, twenty years after Kerr's book, everything changed for adult education. The 1992 Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act spelled it out. For departments inside Higher Education, all the old alliances were either moved or they were shifted from the field entirely. Adult education then had to prove itself on new terms, as just another thread of Higher Education, subject to standard **fact and value distinctions** where all that mattered was what was taught with what results, regardless of the students' age, gender or social background. The more adult education was pulled into emulating core provision, the more difficult it has been for it to claim a continuation of its historic mission. In determining the relative value of their work, adult educators were forced into a new and more brutal relationship with the landscape of educational facts. In this paper I review some of the philosophical problems involved in assessing educational facts and deriving their subsequent value. I first look at Wittgenstein's 1929 paper on Ethics, and then go on to discuss **John Searle's 'social' facts** as a way of maintaining the more traditional egalitarian aim of adult education work in the new circumstances of fighting social exclusion.

The problem

Consider the case where a module at Level 1 carrying 20 SCOTCAT points is organised as part of a first year undergraduate programme inside the university. At the same time, but with the tuition being spread over a longer period, the same is organised outside the university, in a very depressed area as part of an 'outreach' part-time degree. In the case of the former, the students have gained entry to the university through the 'traditional' route of 'A' levels, or as in Scotland, Highers. In the case of the latter, however, the students have gone through no such route. They gain access to their class through open-entry. The spread of marks gained is almost the same in both situations but the unit costs of the second class are marginally higher. The problem follows then of honouring the 'facts' expressed in the marks achieved by the students across the two situations whilst at the same time saying that the facts of the latter situation count as something of more value for the university because of the contribution they make to a more fair higher education system. Can this be done without making the idea of marks completely worthless and the idea of the relative values and costs completely arbitrary ?

Intentionality

According to current criteria, both the class inside and outside the university would attract the same FTE's. They would be described in the same system of representation. Where the facts are the same, the derived value of the classes would be the same and funding would follow. The intention of the department involved in the latter as they target certain areas would not be recognised and would therefore count for nothing. **Facts as FTE's do not take into account intention here.** However it is precisely the intention of the adult education department (endorsed by the parent institution) that would make the latter class important in a different way to the former class, held inside the university.

Wittgenstein

In 1929 Wittgenstein gave his one and only 'popular' lecture in Cambridge. The Wittgenstein of this time had the world existing as a totality of facts. The logical relations of facts had to correspond to relations in the world. What this meant is still a puzzle but he was less obscure in saying that 'the world is all that is the case' and what 'we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence'. **What matters might often be said to lie outside and distinct from facts.** He says that 'ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it'. Were Wittgenstein involved in adult education now, he would be complaining of the illogical madness of having to pour gallons of evaluative liquid into a factual teacup without creating the slightest spill or overflow. He would no doubt point out the limit of the factual teacup and the volume involved in accurately evaluating the work of adult education.

In the 1929 paper Wittgenstein took evaluative statements to be made in two senses :

i. In the **trivial or relative** sense where something is described **as functioning according to some predetermined standard**, and

ii. In the **ethical or absolute sense** where something is **described as failing to meet a standard that ought to have met**.

Evaluative statements in the non-trivial sense are fraught with problems; and expressed as a failure to meet certain standards, are absurd. Deriving values from facts in the logical sense where there is implied a duty or standard that has not been met is not on. This kind of an evaluation can only be made where the facts are assessed against the agent's intention. Wittgenstein comments that 'although all judgements of relative value can be shown to be mere statements of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgement of absolute value'. According to this position then, we can only state the facts of our adult education classes, and yet **we have to bring broader egalitarian considerations into more accurate representations of the value created in the work of our classes**. Why then should we not be absolutely clear in stating that these mysterious 'facts' mean nothing unless the intention of adult education is brought into the matter, and inequality in opportunity is unequivocally expressed as our target ?

Ayer's contribution

Some years after Wittgenstein's 1929 talk, there were a number of pretenders to the analytical throne. All claimed to understand Wittgenstein. Ayer became the spokesman for cool objectivity in the universities. Some of the old universities, especially pride themselves on holding onto the kind of distinctions made by Ayer.

The preface to A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936) is worth quoting at length here :

> The views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the logical outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and Hume. Like Hume, I divide all genuine propositions into two classes : those which, in his terminology, concern 'relations

> of ideas', and those which concern 'matters of fact'. The former class comprises the *a priori* and propositions of logic and pure mathematics, and these I allow to be necessary and certain only because they are analytic. That is, I maintain that the reason why these propositions cannot be confuted in experience is that they do not make any assertion about the empirical world, but simply record our determination to use symbols in a certain fashion. Propositions concerning empirical matters of fact, on the other hand, I hold to be probable but never certain. And in giving an account of their validation I claim also to have explained the nature of truth ... I require of an empirical hypothesis, not indeed that it should be conclusively verifiable, but that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood. If a putative proposition fails to satisfy this principle, and is not a tautology, then I hold that it is metaphysical, and that, being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false, but literally senseless.

It is not contentious to describe Ayer's position as barbaric. To leave the world at the level of description is to leave it incomplete and without a sense of justice. Humans do not weave their way through life like cameras, describing as they go along and leaving things at that. Humans act on the facts according to imaginative possibilities posed in the tension of what 'is' the case and what 'ought' to be the case in a better world. From the 'is' to the 'ought' is not a logical move but it is one easily made. It is a constant complaint of university mandarins that adult educators make this kind of a move regularly in situations where they are no sooner given a task with a remit than they set about rewriting that remit, moving from the 'is' to the 'ought' and letting the move be informed by a strong sense of justice, not pure logic.

Anscombe's brute fact

The words of David Hume (1978) in the Scottish university are sacrosanct. David Hume gave universities his 'fork' in the dichotomy between relations of ideas and matters of fact. Ayer built his career on exhausting Humean puzzles giving an example of how the fork worked itself out. It is Elizabeth Anscombe however who develops the work. Following Anscombe's argument a Miss X may come to the university and say that '180 Scottish £1 notes = £180' and then say that she has 'signed up for an accredited evening course in Glasgow University and handed over the Scottish notes'. A university employee might then point out how Hume's fork divides 'relations of ideas' and 'statements of fact' as it is expressed in these two propositions. The employee might then say that from the two it cannot be reasoned that because Miss X has paid over 180 crisp £1 Scottish notes and she has signed up for an accredited course she is then **as a consequence owed the course** by Glasgow University. The employee might then comment that Miss X should not get her logic confused and should not make jumps in her reasoning from what 'is' the case to what 'ought' to follow. The university employee would be quite right in one way (which did not matter) and completely wrong in another way (which really mattered a great deal).

Considering this simple event in terms of pure description makes no sense. Certainly it is difficult to see how the university would owe Miss X the course from just her handing over £180. The money might be owed for a course already taken. For to arrive at the conclusion of the university owing the course a whole complex net of intentions come into play - individual and institutional. But the situation where Miss X reads things as she does and describes the university as owing her the tuition involved in an accredited course does not seem unreasonable. This is 'simply' because the 'relation of ideas' and 'statement of facts' involved are not free floating entities but are anchored in the solid context of Miss X and the university's intentional relationship. The university, amongst many other things, is about providing accredited courses.

The 'intention' here of course is not something interior. What it is about relates to real students. There is no guarantee that the course is owed X as a result of the payment but in the ordinary set of events, such a situation would very likely be taken as the outcome. This is because the **intention of the University** and the **intention of Miss X** figure centrally, as the whole scenario of facts and their

implications work themselves out in this ordinary way. There is no logical necessity involved and there is no detailed description of what intention means here but the point made by Anscombe is that in some very, very ordinary exchanges, some very simple 'facts' only make sense according to what follows from them when they are considered as integral to interconnected webs of belief where all kinds of things are taken to be the case and are taken to fulfil endlessly complicated functions. And of course some sort of deception is always possible. The point however is that Hume's fork here is meaningless. As enlightened institutions, universities are not bound by the category distinction of 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'. Universities, hopefully function according to an intention of making the world a more just place. Without this the pursuit of excellence and the development of new knowledge is void of any moral content.

John Searle's 'institutional' or 'social' facts

Hilary Putman (1992) made the point in his Gifford Lectures whilst at St Andrew's that any philosophy which can be put in a nutshell belongs in one. Yet this is the kind of philosophy that has most appealed to adult educationalists with Lockean concepts of person and so forth. Metaphysics has somehow been considered well outside our concerns. But this is changing. And it is not the case with John Searle's work, who takes Anscombe's idea and makes institutional facts very distinct from brute facts. Facts based on human agreement are 'institutional' facts and facts not so composed are 'brute' facts which require no such agreement. This agreement forms a collective intention. **Institutional facts are self-referring in accordance with this intention**. John Searle's meaning of intention is not to be confused with that of Daniel Dennett (Searle, 1997, Dennett, 1996). Money, property, governments and marriages are all examples of institutional facts which exist simply because humans agree them to exist. They are objective, but not in the same way as a 'brute' fact. Money for instance is valueless in itself and its value would mean nothing without human compliance in its common function. This is not to say that money exists because of human preferences, evaluations or moral attitudes. There is a common, shared belief in its representation of value because it serves as mediator in the exchange of goods. In this way, the belief that money is valuable acquires a rational basis. But the facts of money like other institutional facts are very different from other facts like 'water is H20' which are independent of any human opinion.

Academic objectivity

Objectivity takes pride of place in universities. In grasping objectivity much depends on it being contrasted with subjectivity. In the epistemic sense 'objective' and 'subjective' are primarily predicates of judgements. We speak of judgements being 'subjective' when the truth or falsity cannot be settled in a 'matter of fact' sort of way, but is dependent on certain attitudes, feelings, or the points of view of those making or hearing the judgement. For 'objective' judgements, it is the facts in the world that make them true and not someone's judgement. The truth or otherwise is independent of anyone's attitude or feelings. In this epistemic sense the university not only claims objective judgements but also through its traditions, it claims access to objective facts.

Searle draws attention to the ontological sense of 'objective' and 'subjective' where they involve predicates of entities and types of entities. They ascribe **modes of existence**. Pains are subjective entities because their being felt is dependent on a subject but mountains are ontologically objective in that their mode of existence is not dependent on any subject perceiving them or having a mental state that grasps them. It is quite feasible for to make subjective (epistemic) judgements and statements about (ontologically) objective things and it is equally so for making objective (epistemic) judgements and statements about (ontologically) subjective things. Searle for instance gives the example that someone might say 'Mount Everest is more beautiful than Mount Snowdon' or 'I now have toothache in my only wisdom tooth'. The pain, the phenomenon itself, exists as a subjective thing, but that I have a dodgy wisdom tooth giving the pain is an objective report. Institutional facts are close to the tooth ache and if work that fights 'social exclusion' is to be seen as particularly valuable, then it must be down to an institutional fact. But the value ascribed to the work by the department and parent university (and perhaps funding bodies and government policy) depends on their intention. It is in this way that institutional facts are self-referring.

The new importance of collective intent

The class organised by the university in an area of social exclusion only makes sense if that **university sees that work as important**. Without devaluing the work done inside the university, the work done to fight social exclusion must carry a separate and quite distinct institutional value. This will involve the 'collective' intentions of the university. It is this intention that is important and not a strict adherence to 'brute' facts that matters in the adult education work of a university. Searle argues that human action does not make up social reality in a causal sense, it is identical with it in the sense of collectively constituting it. So work done in areas of multiple deprivation does not have value because of what students go on to do. The work is at the heart of constructing a more just social reality. This has been the historic purpose of adult education throughout this century. More than ever however, a continuation of that work now becomes dependent on policy formed outside of adult education itself.

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Making links between teaching and research; an example from an inquiry into networked learning

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Introduction

The theme of this conference is the relationship between research and teaching and learning. In this paper I develop a personal view of this question by reflecting on my experience of carrying out research leading towards a Phd on the theme of networked learning while tutoring on, and supporting, several courses which made use of new technologies. My paper looks at difficulties in defining the terms 'teaching' and 'research' but suggests that sustained critical inquiry is central to both. I give as an example my inquiry into the constraints which participants often feel when taking part in on-line discussion and suggest that this inquiry has raised both teaching and research issues.

Establishing a link between teaching and research: addressing a difficulty

What is research and what is teaching? Rowland finds that academics are prone to define research in terms of audience so that a paper delivered to colleagues is a 'research' activity, while one, perhaps the same paper, delivered to, say, undergraduate learners is a 'teaching' activity (Rowland 1995). However the degree of open-endedness is also an issue so that inquiry based learning is more likely to be seen as 'research' whatever the audience. Rowland suggests that an inquiry based approach to teaching and learning, in which the curriculum is challenged and critically debated by both tutors and learners, offers the opportunity to integrate research and teaching, (Rowland 1995, and Rowland 1993). But how is such an approach possible?

Over the last three years I have been working towards a Phd in which I have sought to reflect on my practice as a tutor and a curriculum development worker. In a small way this is another argument for an action research methodology but I want to raise here a more general concern by illustrating how I perceive sustained critical inquiry to be at the heart of both teaching and research. Such inquiry needs to acknowledge and value one's subjective experience of being a tutor within a teaching and learning event but also makes a systematic attempt to understand other people's experiences, say, through interviews and other forms of feedback and through what has been reported within the literature.

Central to my own understanding of such inquiry is the position (at least on my reading) taken here by Michael Polanyi in his discussion of personal knowledge:

> Insofar as the personal submits to the requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but insofar as it is an action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either. It transcends the disjunction between subjective and objective. (Polanyi 1958: 190)

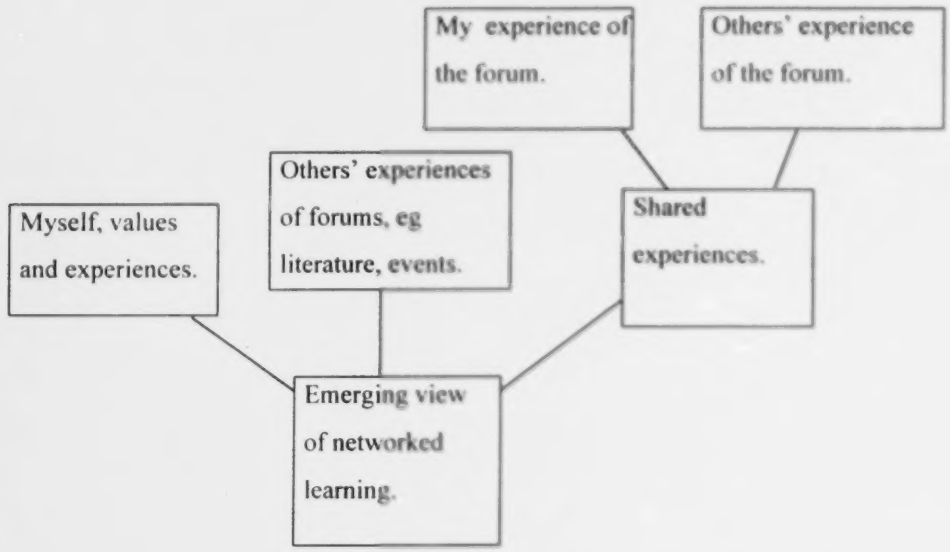
This charts a middle way between the post modern view that there are no rational criteria for making judgements and the positivist view that there is an objective truth to be discovered. Polanyi invests lot of time and energy in critiquing the positivist view (and was writing at a time when such a critique was more controversial than it is today) but he also described the subjective as idiosyncratic if not subject to a commitment to rational criticism. An attraction of this position is the paradox of personal commitment - the acknowledgement of the subjective nature of interpretation makes you more, not less, concerned to reflect rationally on the way in which judgements are reached.

An illustration from my own inquiry into networked learning

By networked learning I am referring to the use of computer communications software to bring learners together (see Fowell and Levy 1995). Central is the sharing of knowledge and ideas and much of my research has focused on asynchronous text-based discussion, eg on-line forums supported by Email discussion lists or conferencing software such as Lotus Notes.

My understanding of networked learning, has been developed in three ways. Firstly, through my general understanding of teaching and learning - I may have come new to the idea of networked learning but I came with existing ideas and past experiences of teaching and learning on which I needed to reflect. Secondly, through developing ideas about the value of networked learning and the idea of on-line knowledge creation through a selection of the existing literature. (And, here I wanted to go beyond the established literature in the field and look at other readings from whatever provenance if I thought they were going to be helpful.) Thirdly, through the shared experience of the forums in which I took part. Participation gave me a sense of what it was like to be a member of different forums - and I recall the varying degrees of ease or discomfort I felt about contributing to discussions - and of the style and content of the messages sent. But I could systematically inquire into other people's experiences of these shared forums by carrying out interviews and attempting to categorise forum messages. These different sources of knowledge all assisted me in developing my personal view of networked learning (see figure1):

Figure 1 Reflections on different sources of knowledge leading to an emerging view of networked learning.


My experience of the forum.
Others' experience of the forum.
Others' experiences of forums, eg literature, events.
Myself, values and experiences.
Shared experiences.
Emerging view of networked learning.

Of course the diagram sets out different types of knowledge but not the relationship between them. To do this I might borrow the well worn metaphor of 'triangulation' - the surveyor takes the mean of three readings from different perspectives to get a more accurate measure. But this is not entirely helpful. Critical inquiry is something more subtle and always involves choices and an awareness of what Winter and others describe as reflexive judgements (p 40 Winter, 1983). Essential to inquiry is the switch of focus from one perspective to another (Polanyi uses the idea of *alternating* perspective: Polanyi 1969: 123-133); reflecting on judgements and asking what is common to different experiences or reported experiences.

Constraints on participation in on-line forums; reflecting on different perspectives of time

During my inquiry into networked learning I found attributes of asynchronous text based discussion which I felt supported teaching and learning, but I also found that, within many of the forums in

which I took part, the number of messages sent was less than many participants would have liked (eg Hammond 1997). To develop a perspective on this required a systematic approach but one in which I could allow serendipitious, or at least unlikely events, to trigger connections between different sources of knowledge. For example, in the midst of my inquiry into networked learning I recalled going to the theatre to see 'As You Like It'. There was a forty minute drive to the theatre and I remember time passing very quickly - I was not paying attention to the journey, I was still thinking about the interviews I had been doing carrying out earlier. When the play began, as often happens to me with a Shakespeare play, I started looking at my watch wondering how long this was going to last. But in time, as always, I became accustomed to the language and as I became absorbed, the play raced by. However, I was pulled up in Act 3 by the celebrated exchange between Rosalind and Orlando in the forest of Arden. Did time pass at a constant pace?:

Rosalind: *by no means sir: Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal and who he stands still withal.....*

Orlando: *Who ambles Time withal?*

Rosalind *With a priest that lacks Latin, and a rich man that hath not the gout; for the one sleeps easily because he cannot study, and the other lives merrily because he feels no pain, the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning, the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury, these Time ambles withal.*

Orlando: *Who doth he gallop withal?*

Rosalind: *With a thief to the gallows: for though he go as softly as foot can fall he think himself too soon there.*

Orlando: *Who stay it still withal?*

Rosalind: *With lawyers in the vacation, for they sleep between term and term, and then they perceive not how Time moves.*

(Shakespeare published 1968: 99)

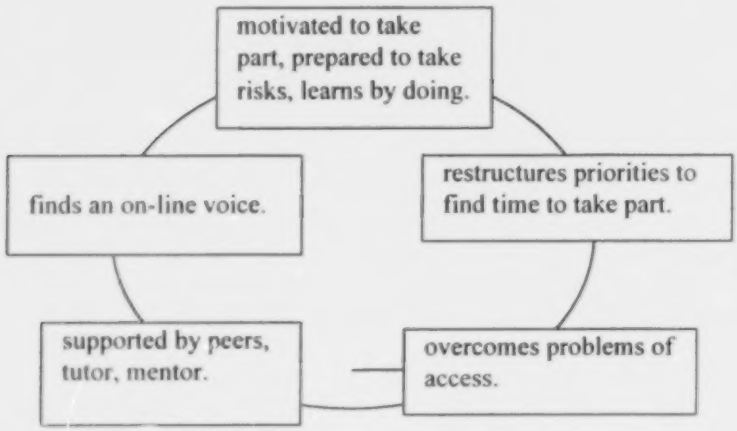
The words resonated in a small way with my own experience of the evening, time passing quickly, then slowly, then quickly again. I later read the scene at home and I remembered seeing the speech quoted in something I had read. With some searching I found that Andy Hargreaves had quoted from the same scene to introduce a section on "phenomenological time" in which he discussed how educators will perceive the constraint of time in different ways (Hargreaves 1994: 95 -116). The experience of the play, coupled with Hargreaves's analysis, gave me a general perspective not only on my own participation within forums but on the interviews I had carried out in which participants had talked about the constraints they had felt in taking part in forums. I now saw respondents' perception of time as a key. Within the interviews I had found particular instances of people who, say, were regularly working at weekends but still found the time to contribute on-line, while there were some people who seemed under less pressure at work but were "unable to find the time to take part". I remembered a colleague, who worked incredibly long hours to a degree of professionalism which went beyond what anyone could have expected from him, who was unable to re-structure his priorities to commit himself to a forum for his own professional development needs. I could then see that my interpretation of participation needed to show that time was indeed a subjective concept but I wanted to reject the voluntarist approach that implied everyone could make the time if they wanted, or at least could find the time at little cost. I knew from talking to friends and colleagues that they were having enormous difficulty juggling the demands of work, family and personal and professional interests. And I could see for myself that continual reflection and analysis was both virtue and vice - Shakespeare had been a rich learning event but was that what I had intended from the evening?

In this example of my research I was given a different perspective on time through different sources of knowledge - the task was to switch from one perspective to another and reflect on what they had in common. In this case I developed a view of time as phenomenological and I went on to look at how the implications this had for other constraint on learners. Through further reflection on my own experiences and conversation with forum members I went on to develop a picture of three types of participant, which I called the communicative learner, the quiet learner and the non participant.

Each pattern of participation started with an attitude towards the forum (crucially a varying level of motivation) which led the participant to see obstacles such as time and access to technology in a way which would either encourage or discourage further participation (see figure 2). I wanted to take a holistic approach in which I thought about the learners' attitudes and not just the specifics of their behaviour such as 'Were they skilled at using computers or not?'; 'How much time did they give themselves to take part?'; 'Who did they go to for help?' and so on. Communicative learners overcame constraints of time and technology; were prepared to take risks; learnt by doing; and had a sense of personal responsibility for the groups they joined. Not surprisingly they were essential to the running of the forums but were a minority of the people to whom I spoke.

As I discuss below this was but a first step in understanding something about participation within on-line forums but I would not have got this far without the different perspectives derived from direct personal experience of teaching and learning; systematic inquiry into my own and other's experiences; and a view from the wider literature.

Figure 2 The communicative learner


motivated to take part, prepared to take risks, learns by doing.
finds an on-line voice.
restructures priorities to find time to take part.
supported by peers, tutor, mentor.
overcomes problems of access.

Implications for further inquiry

My inquiry into networked learning raised many issues concerning the functionality of technologies; the nature of organisations and how learning is supported within them; the value of on-line forums; the nature of professional knowledge; the characteristics of on-line communication; the development of on-line communities; the design of so- called learning environments and so on. But I came back to an over arching interest in the constraints people felt in taking part in forums. I knew that communicative learners were important to the functioning of on-line forums and I wanted to find out if learners can become communicative and, if so, how can they best be supported. I could immediately such an inquiry concerned me both as a researcher and as an on line tutor. I could not separate research from teaching as I can illustrate below in describing work in progress.

Can learners become communicative?

The profile of the communicative learner throws further light as to why some forums fail to generate many messages. The least one can say is that many members of forums will not want to take risks, or feel the same degree of responsibility, as the communicative learner. One might go on generalise that the on-line forum is a minority interest best suited to certain types of committed learners.

However I am not as pessimistic as this. Clearly there are many people who, for whatever reason, will decide that on-line forums are not for them. However, there may well be others who may respond to support and encouragement if they had a better idea of what is involved. Often the argument for on-line discussion is lost by default - learners know that they can use E mail and hence imagine they know how an on-line forum works. One way forward in developing participation within on-line forums is to discuss the principles of on-line working at face to face

sessions and illustrate these principles through hands on working at machines. These activities could be supported by various simulation, group exercises and role play activities aimed to generate a sense of group cohesion with the hope that the confidence gained by taking part in face to face activities, in which the learner is more likely to opt in, will carry over into on-line settings in which it is easier to opt out.

An important point to bear in mind here is that communicative learners did themselves, albeit to varying degrees, experience initial anxiety, which was likely to re emerge, but which they did overcome. Perhaps this is a simple sociological common place, (eg Berger 1963: 110-140) and most first attempts at adopting new roles or new types of behaviour are met by doubt and unease over one's ability to do what is expected and involves questioning the legitimacy of the role. (Through personal experience I think immediately of first standing up in front of a classroom of school students.) But is there more forum organisers can do?

Supporting participants

It is clearly important for new learners to be supported through feedback from tutors and mentors and others in the group (a point reinforced by Davie who suggests that the tutor has a key role in setting the "intellectual climate" for a course, Davie 1989). In many cases uncertainty will lessen with time.

In view of the anxiety associated with one's first involvement with an on-line forum, an appropriate tutor response might be to start with activities which seem to require less risk of exposure. For example, Salmon et al suggest a five stage model in which learners move from directed activities through to independence (the model covers access; introduction and socialisation; information giving and receiving; interaction and, finally, autonomy, Salmon, Giles, and Allan, 1997). This seems intuitively useful as an approach as learners do often begin by 'playing around' with new communications software, eg by sending inconsequential messages. They also introduce themselves at an early stage and usually do this before discussing abstract ideas.

However, the suggested model is overly prescriptive, there seems no good reason for holding back on autonomous use. I also doubt if the stages represent degrees of comfort, for example an introduction may appear quite routine and requiring less risk, but there is no reason for this to be the case. What is needed are genuinely scaffolding strategies (a scaffold in Mercer's phrase consists of "reducing the degrees of freedom" within a task in order that the learner can acquire a difficult skill - he gives the example of asking a child to pick out the border pieces as a first step to tackling a jig saw Mercer 1995). This might seem to imply just the kind of hierarchical approach that Salmon suggests. However crucial in designing a scaffold for learning is an assessment of the learner's readiness for the task (ie the difference between what he or she can achieve already and his or her potential with guided instruction). The tutor or mentor needs to pay attention to the learner and not mechanically follow a hierarchy. This may well mean working in a relatively unstructured fashion from day one with some groups but with others it may mean designing very structured tasks (see Paulsen 1993) and trying to engender learner confidence through pair work or very small group work in which the risk of public exposure is lessened.

I find the idea of working from the learner's readiness for the task useful as it resonates with my existing approach to teaching and learning. Such an approach is a focus of my continuing development as an on-line tutor and curriculum support worker and hence the focus of continuing reflection and systematic inquiry. This is a resolutely practical problem but not a subjective one. It is one that can be approached with rigor. This is educational research and, as Carr and Kemmis point out, is informed by the fact that:

> education as such is not a theoretical activity. Rather, it is a practical activity, the purpose of which is to change those being educated in some desirable ways. One extremely important consequence of the practical nature of education is that educational research cannot be defined by reference to the aims appropriate to research activities concerned to resolve theoretical

problems, but, instead, must operate within the framework of practical ends in terms of which educational activities are conducted. (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 108)

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The trinity ring of knowledge: teaching, learning and research

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In this paper we consider the role of a peer support and co-operative inquiry group in the context of postgraduate research in continuing education. Our group of six professionals researching for doctorates, together with our supervisor, who participated as a peer member of the group researching his own practice, came together initially to support each other in our specific research activities. In our regular research meetings we were concerned with issues on the fringes of factual knowledge: with perceptions, feelings and definitions; a search for questions as well as for answers, and we reflected on the activities and experiences of the group itself. We will argue that the development of reflection and co-operative inquiry groups continues the practice of scholarship as a unity of teaching, learning and research. This unity, or 'trinity ring', is at the heart of university education and the development of the scholastic imagination.

When writing the paper we continued the co-operative approach we had developed in our other activities. One of the authors (Mashengele) prepared an analysis of notes that had been prepared after each meeting of the group. This analysis was then discussed at a meeting of the group and key themes identified. The discussion was taped and a full transcription prepared. Each member of the group was also asked to respond to several questions in writing to ascertain their personal experience of the group. The other author (Hampton) then prepared the synopsis which was discussed at a further group meeting. Finally, Hampton prepared a draft of the paper which was sent to Mashengele for comment before submission. After three years the group is at a time of change. Two members have graduated and some have returned to their own countries. The paper has been sent to every member of the group but their comments were not received in time to affect the final draft before submission.

The formation of the group

Continuing education has a tradition of co-operative group work which is often absent from postgraduate studies. Conscious of this anomaly, Hampton became interested in the development of co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996) and critical friendship groups. He had earlier invited his M.Ed. students to form such a group and had learned much about his own practice (Bennett and others 1997). The Ph.D. students he was supervising presented an opportunity to continue learning about the holistic nature of the trinity ring of knowledge with a completely different group. The group when formed comprised two full-time and four part-time students from five nationalities, together with the supervisor. We were experienced professionals with responsibilities in education, research or training. Our topics varied widely (Fang 1996a and 1996b; Felix-Corrall 1996 and 1997; Mashengele 1995 and 1997; White 1998), but were all dependent on qualitative methodology.

The group met in a university room approximately every six weeks. The supervisor took notes which were sent to other group members before the following meeting. These notes were not only a record of meetings, but useful documents for reflecting on our own research activities. In addition to these notes, it was agreed to allow group members to tape-record sessions if they so wished. This enabled full benefit to be obtained from discussions of draft outlines and chapters. Taping was particularly helpful for members whose first language was not English. Meetings took place between 7:00 and 8:30pm to allow group members time for travelling, but some group members stayed behind after 8:30pm over a social drink to share and discuss specific issues regarding their research.

We agreed to share personal and research experiences and difficulties as a way of combating the feelings of isolation that can affect research students as they plough their lonely research furrow.

First, however, we had to develop the trust that would enable us to act as a learning group: we had to develop an understanding both of each other and of each other's work. To these ends, we spent time at group meetings presenting written biographies and our developing understanding of our research topics. The knowledge of biographies was crucial: it enabled us to acknowledge our different ontological positions, to know each other as people with histories and differences.

The role of the group: process and research issues

Every member of the group had a distinct topic which was unrelated to those chosen by other members. At first this led us to question the purpose and validity of the group but we came to understand that, although the topics were different, we shared a concern both for the research journey and for the process of qualitative methodology. The research journey represented a slow movement from being unsure of the research topic, and of our own academic abilities, to feeling confident and able to relax as we talked as equals in the group. Unlike the earlier M.Ed. group, we were at different stages on our journeys and this proved helpful both for those who joined later and for the part-time students. The full-time students could move more quickly, and the others were able to learn from their experience of the organisation required for a research endeavour. Just as important, the example of others enhanced our confidence that it could be done: we could emerge from our initial confusion and structure a feasible thesis. Moreover, once we began to share conceptual frameworks and draft chapters with each other, we could see how each draft reflected the personality and experience of the author. There was not a template governing the way a Ph.D. thesis should be written. The examples from others gave each of us confidence that our way of doing it could also be legitimate. We also began to recognise the standards we needed to attain.

For those of us who are international students, there were additional issues affecting our research journey. We were entering a different cultural and educational environment where we were unsure of the social and academic conventions. For some of us, language differences caused social as well as academic difficulties. And, of course, there was always the possibility of prejudice or overt racism. These factors accentuated the feelings of isolation affecting all research students (see Felix-Corrall 1997). The group meetings were helpful in dealing with all these issues. For example, two of us found it difficult to express ourselves in other social and academic settings as we perceived people's impatience with our hesitant English. We felt more comfortable speaking in the group where we had developed trust in each other and this gave us greater confidence in other situations. The group confronted differences in language as an academic and epistemological issue rather than merely an inconvenience or, as we feared in other situations, an inadequacy. This approach, referred to again later in the paper, gave our linguistic skills a status that enhanced equality within the group.

The role of the group in dealing with previous experiences of prejudice or racism was also important. One of us, who had come through a very racist situation in his own country, expressed his feelings in the following words:

> It was really beautiful and comforting to know that you are amongst people who are not going to give you that sort of feeling. That I think is ... important ... putting up defences takes a lot of energy.

This energy was much better spent on research.

Cultural expectations could also be explored more easily in the group than in the one-to-one period of supervision. For cultural reasons, for example, some of us found it difficult, at first, to address our supervisor informally as 'Bill' while he was unaware of the tension this was causing. This seemingly trivial matter actually has a deeper significance. Communications between people are more difficult if we do not name each other, while formal titles can put a distance between student and supervisor which is not conducive to the open exploration of difficulties whether of a personal or academic nature. The meetings of the group set the tone for mutual respect within a climate of equality. It was sometimes easier, also, to raise questions about standards and administrative procedures within the

confines of the group, particularly when this could be done in the context of an issue raised by a home student.

The role of the group: academic and research issues

In addition to supporting each other in the process of research, we were able to support each other in more specific matters of academic method and content. We could share our emerging thoughts, our knowledge and skills, and our experience. Let us take each of these in turn.

First, by sharing some of the perspectives and approaches that were emerging from our reading we could test our thinking within a group of critical friends who were concerned to strengthen the coherence of our reasoning. The sharing, in this case, benefited the sharer in the first instance, although others would find their own thinking stimulated by new perspectives.

Second, as a group of experienced professionals we possessed skills and knowledge from our previous or current employment which was made available to the group. For example, one of us had been a university librarian with responsibilities for assisting research students with literature searches. She also had qualifications and experience in appropriate I.T. skills. She conducted group sessions on these topics and also assisted individual members of the group to improve their I.T. skills. Another of us had worked as a research assistant and had experience with I.T. software handling large quantities of data. The help given by the group members to each other in this way, which sometimes amounted to many hours of one-to-one tuition, could not possibly have been provided by the supervisor whose expertise and time was necessarily more limited than the collective resources of the group.

Third, the supervision provided by the supervisor to each individual student was supplemented in more subtle ways within the group. We shared, for example, our experiences of interviewing, analysing data, constructing conceptual frameworks and writing up results. These discussions had an immediacy not always apparent in more formal supervision sessions. As the supervisor explained:

> I can tell people until I'm blue in the face that interviewing takes a long time, that transcribing takes a long time, but when Kevin tells you that he sat there for two hours and then the person didn't turn up, makes another appointment and he doesn't turn up for that ... when Conchita talks about the number of hours it took to transcribe her interviews and the difficulty she has as a Spanish speaker interviewing Arabic speakers, then it becomes real, in a way that it doesn't when the supervisor simply **tells** you.

The contribution these discussion made to our understanding was often very significant. We learnt a great deal, for example, about the cultural implications of members of one ethnic group approaching another for research purposes and discussed the ethical issues involved. Once again, these matters had a greater salience when grounded in experience.

The emphasis on research methods grounded in experience was entirely consistent with the qualitative approaches we were adopting. It gradually became clear, however, that there were also epistemological issues involved in our group meetings. When we emphasise a qualitative methodology, we imply a relativity of knowledge that is inconsistent with the power relationship inherent in the relationship between teacher and student. Even if the supervisor encourages research students to develop their own approaches, they will be influenced by his or her approach and experience. In our group, we considered a wider range of research **and life** experiences than could be brought forward by the supervisor alone. This co-operative learning gave a greater measure of equality to different research approaches.

Despite their long professional experience, some members of the group were still nervous when they first presented their work for discussion within the group. Talking about research seemed different from the other teaching with which they were more familiar. The support of the group enabled them to gain in confidence. Several members later submitted papers to academic conferences having first discussed a draft within the group.

Discussion

Miller and Boud (1996: 9-10) have emphasised that learning is an holistic activity which is affected by its social, cultural and emotional context. Teachers and supervisors are seldom able to support their students in the full complexity of this context even though such support is crucial for academic success. Peer support groups can provide a more fertile environment for the personal growth that is inherent in the learning process. As mature research students, we were concerned to research topics that resonated with our biographies. One of us confessed:

> I remember at this particular time it really hit me that the research was not really about the people I was planning to interview, it was about me ... and I thought that the responsibility on me is so incredibly great because anything I do, any word I say, defines what I am about ... that made me ... humble.

The group provided a place where these insights could be shared and where frustrations with the research process could be expressed and the wounds eased. It is not easy to combine research for a Ph.D. with continuing responsibilities for work and family: the research has a price. The group gave support because we all valued the idea of research. One of us thought:

> This is really weird, to be with a group of people who were involved and who believed that you were doing a Ph.D. It was encouraging.

Although family and friends might be sympathetic and supportive, they could not enter our experience, simply because they were not living a similar experience.

For those of us who are international students, the group was valued as an opportunity to overcome feelings of isolation within the host community and to learn from the experience of other international students. One of us felt:

> I have gained knowledge and understanding of different cultures and, at the same time, I have gained friendship and a sense of being united and belonging to a community of people who want to make a contribution to our society.

Of course, we all gained from the international nature of the group both personally and academically. In addition to the broadening of our knowledge of other cultures, we benefited from the challenge to our own 'taken-as-givens' which caused us to reflect more deeply on our assumptions. This was especially important in the discussions we had about language. Languages are saturated with the cultural heritage of different societies. An idea or concept in one language may be very difficult to express in another. Indeed, it may be as difficult as fitting squares into circles. To illustrate this point, Fang Xiao described how she saw Chinese as a square language and English as a round language (Fang 1996b: 31-32). These considerations caused us to reflect upon epistemological issues: what is knowledge?; whose knowledge was recognised?; how can we communicate one society's knowledge to someone from another culture? Discussions of such issues enabled us to deepen our understanding of the culturally bound nature of our qualitative research.

Conclusion

In describing our group as a peer support and co-operative inquiry group, we need to distinguish the role of each type of group in our co-operative endeavours. We acted as a peer support group in relation to each individual student and his or her research project. The supervisor was not, in this case, receiving peer support although he was a full participant in the group and gaining in understanding during group discussions. We became a co-operative inquiry group when we began to reflect on the supervision process itself. In this case, we all contributed both our experience and opinions. The distinction between student and supervisor disappeared as we all became both the object and the subject of the research project. In practice, it is not easy to distinguish these two roles

of the group as the peer support was, of course, essential data for the research into the supervision process.

Throughout our time together, we were all participating equally in the trinity ring of knowledge as teachers, learners and researchers. The integration of these three roles is common in university continuing education at every level of academic endeavour. The great extramural tutors constantly credited their students with the stimulation that prompted research and publication (Hoggart 1991: 95-96). Through the adoption, and adaptation, of the ideas of reflective practice and co-operative inquiry, we have made the unity of these three aspects of scholarship more explicit. We have also enriched the process of research supervision for both students and supervisor.

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Informal practitioner theory: eliciting the implicit

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Much has been written about informal theories used by professionals (Argyris and Schon, 1974, Bright, 1996, Usher and Bryant, 1989). Informal theory as described by Argyris and Schon refers to the many informal propositions, beliefs, views and attitudes we have about the world. Unlike academic theory which is subject to extensive analysis, criticism and testing, informal theory remains private, implicit and not rigorously tested. This paper describes how informal theory was elicited from a group of practitioners in the specialised field of adult basic education using Kelly's Repertory Grid, an in depth interview technique. It demonstrates that the Repertory Grid is an appropriate and highly successful technique in eliciting personal constructs about adult basic education. It argues that analysis of personal constructs provides the basis for the articulation of informal practitioner theory. Finally, the paper argues that informal practitioner theory could inform development of adult basic education practice.

Formal and informal theory

There has been much debate in recent years about how adult educators should have underpinning knowledge and understanding in addition to teaching skills (Hyland, 1993, Chown and Last, 1993). It has been argued that adult educators do not necessarily know about or find formal theories about adult education helpful (Bright, 1989, Brookfield, 1993, Usher and Bryant, 1989). This paper develops the argument proposed by Usher and Bryant (1989) that informal theories used by practitioners are helpful in examining their professional practice. It suggests that by identifying the informal theoretical perspectives, a practice based theory of adult education could be developed and tested.

Adult basic education is currently found throughout the post compulsory sector and encompasses a range of activities including literacy, numeracy, and language development. A recurring theme for basic education practitioners is that of good practice although it has proved difficult to find clear definitions of what this may mean (Hillier, 1994). Adult basic education practices and culture have developed within the field of adult education. The theoretical models used adult basic education professional development draw upon adult education theory. Although adult basic education practitioners can be seen to operate in a clearly defined field, their practice can be analysed from the same perspectives of adult education in general.

Adult education contains a rich and confusing literature on its practice. Theories of adult education practice themselves have various purposes; they address adult learning styles, they attempt to identify purposes and delivery, they explain adult education as social policy, adult education as a means of empowerment and of self-fulfilment. A newcomer to adult education, and adult basic education in particular, is likely to be bewildered and frustrated by the confusing application of source disciplines to the study of educating adults.

Thus, adult education practitioners encounter difficulty with formal theory. Yet practitioners do not operate in an atheoretical way (Gibson, 1986). Practice itself contains much tacit and implicit knowledge (Eraut, 1994). This knowledge is defined as practical theory by Carr and Kemmis (1986), and informal theory by Usher and Bryant (1989) It 'forms' their practice and enables them to make sense of what they are doing. Examining their informal practice could also inform and refine the formal theoretical analyses of educational practice. However, analysing formal theory is relatively easy compared with the tacit, implicit informal practitioner theory because the former has been made public and is available for scrutiny and debate. The task of educational theory, according to Usher and Bryant, is to 'make explicit what is largely implicit in informal practitioner theory' (Usher and Bryant, 1989, p91). Yet how is it possible to articulate what is implicit? A possibility is to use the processes of critical reflection to analyse the 'taken for granted' of everyday practice.

Reflecting and critically examining on practice (Schon 1983, 1987) may provide the framework for informal theory to be examined.Yet as Brookfield (1995) argues, encouraging practitioners to critically reflect is not easy. Not only do they need to identify deeply held and implicit assumptions about their practice, they must be able to analyse this in a way which can be meaningful not just to themselves but to others. Without this, practice will continue to operate in a superficially analysed way of Argyris and Schon's (1974)Model I and possibly block development of good practice.

Eliciting informal theory: Personal Construct Theory and Kelly's Repertory Grid

How, then, can the tacit, implicit and possibly unexamined informal practitioner theory be elicited so that it can be publicly espoused and critically reflected upon, and subsequently be used to inform formal theory? It requires a methodology able to identify hidden meanings, unexpressed ideas and ways of looking at the world. These meanings may not be articulated easily. Such meanings which form the basis of informal theory can be described as 'personal constructs', which, in this context, form an individualised conception of professional practice. This section of the paper contends there is a methodology appropriate for eliciting such constructs. The method is Kelly's Repertory Grid and is developed from his theory of Personal Constructs (Kelly, 1955).

Personal Construct Theory

Essentially, Personal Construct Theory is based on a view of 'man the scientist' (sic) (Kelly, 1969, p66). People construct theories of their reality and test these out as 'the world rolls along' (Bannister and Mair, 1968, p5). The construction of events enables them to make sense of the world as they see it. If people have idiosyncratic ways of construing the world, then this includes the informal theories that they have about their practice. The way that people construe their practice is their informal theory. The challenge is to make this informal theory or personal construction of practice explicit.

What are constructs? Our constructs are systematically organised and are bi-polar in nature. For example, the construct 'warm' could have many bi-polar opposites: 'cold', 'un-friendly' or 'uncomfortable'. The way 'warm' is defined is in terms of what it is not. Constructs are like 'a pair of goggles' through which we view sections of the world. Construing events is a process which allows discrimination and organisation of events and the anticipation of future possibilities. Constructs thus direct a person's outlook and in an ultimate sense control her or his behaviour.

Kelly developed The Repertory Grid as a technique which could elicit personal constructs. It uses a reflexive model of analysis and provides the first stage in a process of critical analysis of what has been implicit and unquestioned. The Repertory Grid Technique comprises an in depth interview in three parts: elicitation of elements, elicitation of constructs and the rating of constructs for 'fit' against the elements.

The technique consists of using a set of elements to draw out constructs which are then analysed to form a representation of a person's construct system. Elements represent the area to be investigated. They can comprise people known to the respondent, tasks in an occupation or products used in market research. In the case of basic education pracatitioners, the elements comprised tasks and activities representing their professional practice.

Once the elements have been elicited they are given to the respondent in threes known as triads. Each time, the respondent is asked to identify in what way two of the elements are similar and different from the third. For an adult basic education practitioner, a triad of activities could consist of 'training tutors', 'assessing potential students' and 'acting as technician for computers'. A possible combination selected by the respondent could be 'training tutors' and 'assessing potential students' placed together with 'technician for computers' as the 'odd one out'. If asked in what way the first two are similar and different from the third, the respondent might say that the former are to do with what is important and the latter an important but less enjoyable activity. Further probing might establish that the first two are linked because they relate to working with people, the latter with machines. Both are important to the respondent but what defines the difference is the person-centred aspect. This could be further explored through questioning by the interviewer until the respondent is unable to express any further

differences. This way of describing the difference ultimately produces a bi-polar construct, entirely described in the respondent's own words.

After the constructs are obtained, each with two poles or 'opposites', respondents are asked to rate how much each constructs applies to each of the elements. The rating exercise results in a numerical grid with scores for each element and construct. Thus, a bi-polar construct 'unpredictable in expectations - predictable' would have a rating of 5 for unpredictable and 1 for predictable. Using this scale, each of the elements is given a score. An element 'staffing requirements' may be given a score of 4 because of the unpredictability of working with part time staff, whereas an element 'training administration staff' may have a rating of 2 as it is a tried and tested activity.

This grid of scores for constructs against all the elements is analysed to establish any similarities between constructs and elements normally using the statistical process factor analysis, either principal components or cluster analysis. This information is then interpreted to provide a focus for discussion with the respondent. The interpretation of the factors is a significant aspect of the technique. By identifying the ways of construing for the range of elements and then establishing key underlying factors, there is an ideal opportunity to discuss if this has meaning for the respondent and further probe into the tacit and implicit ways of thinking about the context under discussion.

Using The Repetory Grid with Adult Basic Education practitioners

A sample of thirty tutors and organisers of adult basic education was drawn from the North East London region. The tutors were involved in five areas of basic skills work: literacy, numeracy, special needs, government training schemes and open learning. Tutors and organisers all had a minimum of one year's experience in their role. They were interviewed twice, once to elicit the Repertory Grid and once to discuss the resulting factors.

The grids were analysed using principal components analysis on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Each grid contained a minimum of nine constructs. There were usually three to four factors resulting from the factor analysis, although in some cases only two factors emerged. Each factor was then examined for constructs or elements which best exemplified it. A two dimension graph with the first two factors as axes was used to depict the results for each person's grid.

A significant departure from the Repertory Grid Technique was made in the follow up interviews. Normally, the researcher interprets the statistical information and identifies suitable labels for the principal factors which emerge. In this study, I asked the respondents to suggest suitable labels. In addition, some respondents found it useful to use diagrams to demonstrate their analysis of the statistical information. They appreciated the opportunity to make sense of what was an initially incomprehensible computer printout. This proved to be a particularly fruitful process, where much discussion took place.

The study yielded 60 interviews transcripts, 30 grids and 30 graphs displaying the relationship between significant constructs and the first two factors derived from principal components analysis.The factors arising from the constructs and elements, although described idiosyncratically by each respondent, provided the basis for analysis of common themes. The search for commonality in the factors was intended to test for any coherence in basic education theory that may be held informally by its practitioners. It tested the existence of an 'ethos' of basic skills practice, usually described as 'good practice' by basic education practitioners. The full analysis of constructs and elements can be found in Hillier (1994).

A common theme for all respondents is one of 'student centredness and caring'. For 26 of the 30 respondents, this emerged in the first factor. Only one respondent did not have this theme in any of her factors. Given the wide range of backgrounds of the tutors and organisers, the boroughs in which they work and the level of their experience, it is remarkable that they appear to be in close agreement on how they construe their practice. During the feedback interviews where I asked respondents to

label their factors, they often expressed a feeling of relief that the student centred factor had appeared and 'confirmed' their own perceptions of what they should be doing as good tutors or organisers.

The second and subsequent factors were more variable. These can be categorised in four ways: tension between student centredness and institution demands, 'ethos' of basic skills, reflection of practice and practical considerations. Factor labels of 'bureaucracy/accountability', and 'adhering to requirements' indicate the tensions between student centredness and institution demands. They reflect the wider issues in working in basic skills. 'Ethos' of basic skills is suggested by the labels 'strong brief', and 'seeing the way forward'. Reflection of practice is implied by labels 'ideas', talking-thinking' and practical considerations is identified in labels including 'planning and preparing' and 'delivery of course'.

The analysis of the factors suggests that practitioners' constructs about their work are pyramidal in structure, with the range of fourth and third factors at the base, rising to student centredness at the top. I suggest that student centredness is superordinately construed and directs practitioners' informal theory about their practice. The subsequent factors relate to tensions in this practice, through institutional or organisational demands which impinge on the ideal practice, issues of responsibility and issues of the purposes and through the vision that basic skills requires. Identification with the ethos, or 'following the party line' in part reflects the strong sense of identity that practitioners have with their work. From a fairly wide range of constructs obtained in the first interviews, the grid analysis provided a closely structured view of basic skills work.

Informal theory in practice

The interviews involved practitioners in, and enabled them to identify, the implicit and tacit beliefs which they hold about their work. The purpose of my investigation was to establish these as informal practitioner theory. To achieve this, I had collaborated with respondents on making sense of their constructs and factors. From this point, I began to develop my own analysis of the interview data. I used the factor analysis and factor labels to search for common themes which can be interpreted as tenets of informal practitioner theory.

I used two main approaches: analysis of the factors produced in the Repertory Grid methodology and categorisation of the transcript material. Analysis of the considerable transcript material derived from the Repertory Grid interviews is contained in Hillier (1994).
My data indicated two significant sets of constructs for practitioners: their core beliefs, which appear to be held prior to any involvement in basic skills teaching and an ethos of basic education which is adhered to and is resistant to change.

The homogeneity of the first factors identified by the analysis is particularly significant given that personal construct theory argues for people's idiosyncratic way of making sense of their environment. Across a range of boroughs, in the teaching of literacy, numeracy, special needs and employment training, tutors and organisers held a consistent interpretation of what basic education practice should be. It was a highly prescriptive view.

The clear adherence to student centredness, I would argue, is an example of a 'sacrosanct' system. Practitioners referred to student centredness as the fundamental aspect of their practice throughout the interviews. The ethos of their practice implied a deeply held belief of what basic skills practice should be. The ways of construing practice, however, do not constitute statements of theory. The construing could be described as an 'amorphous magma' of belief, value premises and propositions. How can this be used to provide a theoretical framework?

Theory, even if it is informally expressed, is implicit in the practical knowledge which respondents in my investigation use. They are concerned with 'messy' everyday situations. The notion of theory I use is in the original sense of theoria, ie 'directed to things that happen "always or for the most part"' (McCarthy, 1984, p2). The formulation of theory is an important stage in refining practical knowledge. Theory uses propositions which help to describe, explain and predict. Propositions allow

for critical scrutiny. Defining propositions represents a formal development of hypotheses which will predict the occurrence of the phenomena. These hypotheses can subsequently be tested to inform formally held theories.

My investigation identified five tenets of informal practitioner theory

1.A student centred philosophy
2.Resistance to any change in practice which threatens the tenets of student centredness
3.The 'ethos' of basic skills practice
4.Reflection on practical aspects of basic skills
5.The acquisition of philosophy and practice through experience

Propositions were derived from each tenet, a full description of which can be found in Hillier (1994). Example propositions are as follows

- Students encounter many problems from not having a sufficient level of basic skills.
- These problems may be identified as needs.
- Students learn best if their needs are met.

These propositions are derived from the 'needs-meeting' rationale (Griffin, 1987, Keddie, 1980, Usher and Bryant, 1989, Paterson 1989). The interview material contained numerous examples of 'needs meeting' statements although very few respondents had read any of the formal literature.

The propositions of informal practitioner theory have sociological, pedagogical and philosophical bases. They are located in a sociological model which identifies inequalities in society and relates these to differing power relations. People who lack basic skills are seen to have problems which result partly from this unequal share of power. They do not have access to jobs, wealth and ways to develop their skills because of the limits of their basic skills.The informal practitioner theory is related to a view of learning that treats students as active participants in the learning process. It expects students to know what they want to learn and how they should acquire the desired skills and knowledge. Philosophically, the informal theory is rooted in an ethical theory. It is normative by requiring practitioners to facilitate the personal development of their students. This relates also to the sociological model where students' basic skills needs are viewed as 'presenting problems'. The students are the focus of the action, not the students' competence in basic skills.

Informed practice

Eliciting informal practitioner theory is the first stage in developing informed practice. My investigation provides evidence that they practice in ways which formal theory describes. I believe this creates a dual problem where practitioners eschew formal theory and therefore do not inform their practice and where formal theory does not take account of the informal theory based upon their practice. I believe practitioners should critically examine their informal theory and identify where it relates to a more formal theoretical framework. Through analysing informal theory, practice can be developed. Without critical analysis, practical knowledge and informal theory risk 'remaining at the level of anecdotal, idiosyncratic reminiscence' (Brookfield, 1993, p75).

This paper has demonstrated that Kelly's Repertory Grid is an appropriate tool for eliciting informal practitioner theory which is derived from personal constructs and factors. It is a particularly effective method of reflective practice by providing a focus without imposing structures by the interviewer. It provides a rich source of interpretative data which can be explored collaboratively with the respondents. From this, propositions can be derived which can be tested. These propositions and tenets form the basis of informal practitioner theory. This methodology may provide the means by which formal theories of adult education can be informed by practical knowledge.

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Guidance as research, teaching and learning.

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Introduction

Guidance, research, teaching and learning are activities all open to interpretation. They are, consequently, the subject of debate and discussion amongst educational observers, planners, providers and participants. For me, the inter-relationship between them is reminiscent of a kaleidoscope with their interaction ever changing and emerging into new possibilities and images. In this paper, I seek to identify the nature of, and relationship between guidance as action research, as teaching and as learning - in order to ascertain the implications of reformulating conventional notions of these activities for adult learners studying in a community context. The research into guidance and learner support needs of students participating in Lancaster University's Community Access programme (CAP) is not complete yet. Nevertheless, some useful insights from tutors and students comments are emerging which reveal the potential for further consideration of guidance as a topic of research, and a strategy in the teaching and learning process.

Guidance

In the context of this paper, guidance permeates the research, teaching and learning and is the focus of this discussion. Although there is considerable variation in the day to day delivery of formal guidance services, there is, at least in theory, general agreement amongst professionals of the principles which indicate the nature of good practice. The HEQC framework for guidance and learner support is typical. It includes the principles of learner centredness, confidentiality, impartiality, equal opportunities and accessibility (HEQC 1995). Guidance policy and practice continue to be influenced by the guidance activities listed by the Unit for Development in Adult Continuing Education (UDACE). These are informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling, advocating and feeding back (UDACE 1986).

Recent guidance initiatives have raised the profile and debate about who delivers guidance, as well as what, when, and how it is delivered. These initiatives have emerged at a time when there has been an increase in institutional auditing; a focus on value for money, and the development of quality assurance mechanisms. It is, therefore, not surprising that funded proposals need to demonstrate effectiveness, reduced unit costs as well as open the opportunities for guidance and learner support. For instance, the DfEE Gala project (McNair 1996) focuses on the development of learner autonomy; thus enabling students to access more effectively the opportunities available to them, whereas the introduction of FEFC's mechanism of funding, being attached to guidance activities has contributed to the compartmentalisation of guidance activities into pre entry, induction, on course, post or exit phases and is based on the premise that progression is linear.

Despite the apparent increase in opportunities for quality educational guidance only 6% of 'non learners' (which is not in my opinion an accurate description of an adult) reported having received guidance since leaving full time education (Beinart and Smith 1998). Although 57% of 'non-learners' found the guidance, they received to be useful this was a much lower percentage than for learners, which was 85%. There are numerous reasons that might explain these differences in the take up of guidance opportunities. Our evidence indicates that some potential learners are operating at a pre - pre - entry phase (Oglesby and Houghton 1997). Alternatively these 'non-learners' may be experiencing a cultural mismatch that distances them from the Discourses that make it possible for them to engage in conventional guidance activities in a meaningful and satisfactory way (Lankshear 1997). I will now summarise some of the general features associated with action research to provide a background for outlining the distinctive attributes of CAP's action research programme associated with exploring the use of guidance in the teaching and learning process.

Action Research

Action research comes in many guises. For many practitioners the action research process provides a link between self-evaluation and professional development. It can be an effective strategy for finding solutions to localised problems, and in this respect, has much in common with the notion of Schon's development of the reflective practitioner (Schon 1987). Action research models typically adopt a cyclical process, each model attempting to enable participants undertaking the research to identify, evaluate and improve individual or organisational practice. Zuber-Skerritt summarises the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) who categorised models of action research according to the relationship between researcher and other participants as either technical, practical or emancipatory (Zuber-Skerritt 1996, 6).

Keen to obtain the different perspectives and enrich the kaleidoscopic images, CAP's research into guidance issues has included students, tutors and come community contacts. Evidence was obtained via focus groups, taped interviews, diary notes, and forms used for enrolment, evaluation and educational guidance. To minimise the limitations of each source of data we adopted a strategy of triangulation. To some extent CAP research, appears to span each of the categories described by Carr and Kemmis. Overall however, the approach is probably closest in form to the Carr and Kemmis' practical model, relying on the co-operation of tutors and students to provide information and evaluate the use of guidance in the teaching and learning process.

Tutors, moved between the practical and emancipatory action research categories. Tutors contributed to the CAP data collection in two ways. Firstly, during staff development sessions where they shared ideas concerning the development of educational guidance forms, which they subsequently used to record data concerning students' study and learner support needs. Secondly, they took part in end of course interviews. The aim here was to use a semi-structured interview schedule, in order to ascertain their interpretation of guidance terminology, and treatment of guidance activities during the course.

The process of talk about practice is described as a 'reflective conversation with a unique and uncertain situation' (Schon 1983,130). Part of CAP's action research is concerned with trying to make open and explicit the informal theories used by community tutors. The informal theories that influence practitioners' action, have been criticised for being individual, limited in scope and focusing on specific problems (Zuber-Skerritt 1996). Consequently they can be difficult to scrutinise and examine. CAP Tutors' guidance practice is explored through the end of course interviews; a strategy which a number of tutors have identified as enabling them to clarify their own thoughts, as well as recognising, understanding more fully and improving their practice. Guidance as action research is requiring tutors to theorise about their practice. Therefore it functions to make informal theory about guidance open and explicit. Although participation in the end of course interviews is not contractually compulsory, it is clear tutors recognised the importance and valued participation in the research. As the tutor Paul explained when he was asked how the CAP team could help him support students:

> I think things like this interview, especially if we can integrate some of the ideas, things I mentioned. I'm much more clear about what their needs are...for example, now I would like to bring the library to them and we could use the CD ROM...and build it into their assignments... (255-58, 273-75).

Despite their willingness to participate, the affect of existing relationships between tutors and CAP staff remains a significant factor of the research. For instance, since CAP ultimately represented the 'face' of the tutors' employer, it is not possible to rule out their desire to please, at least in the context of the interview. In contrast, the teaching situation afforded tutors far greater autonomy. Operating as 'street level bureaucrats' (Hudson 1993) tutors attempt to interpret CAP's quality assurance procedure appertaining to guidance and adapt it to a programme of activities appropriate for their learners. In this process of policy implementation tutors are clearly performing in the 'swampy lowlands' or 'indeterminate zones of practice' which are characterised by uncertainty, uniqueness and a conflict of competing values (Schon 1987). The nature of the tutors' task is unique because it is shaped by a multitude of factors. These factors might include: a disparate group of students whose educational and

life experiences are diverse; a curriculum which is tailor made to match the students' interests; and a teaching environment, which is non threatening, convenient for the students and therefore, often unconventional.

Teaching and learning as integral to the guidance and learning process

Although employed by Lancaster University, community tutors normally had close connections with an agency or community group and therefore had prior knowledge about the students, their backgrounds and possible study and learner support needs. These existing relationships were important in terms of the course development and delivery. Each course is tailor made to suit the particular group, using one of Lancaster University's flexible foundation credit frameworks - personal, study, investigation, enterprise or IT skills. The frameworks cover a range of higher education skills, which are adapted by tutors who have an insider perspective, to ensure that the curriculum is culturally and socially relevant, sensitive and useful to the students. Where possible, CAP courses take place in familiar venues, at negotiated times convenient to the students, and with added learner support such as crèche facilities for parents, or IT equipment for students with disabilities.

What is also significant, especially in respect of the guidance, teaching and learning relationship is that each foundation credit includes activities, which raise students' awareness about the course-related issues that they need to consider. Alternatively, tutors provide students with opportunities that facilitate the development of skills that will enable them to access more easily traditional guidance services. In the National Adult Learning Survey 1997 (Beinart and Smith 1998) the opportunities for guidance listed clearly locate educational guidance as the domain of official institutions and as a discrete activity. Many of the students with whom CAP operates do not have knowledge, about or an expectation of, higher education. The notion of higher education has not previously been part of their agenda. Although incomplete, the research that CAP has been undertaking suggests that for some students, their notion of and personal agendas concerning, higher education may be changing. In part, these changes may be attributable to their experience of higher education received via CAP provision. Changes in student attitude towards higher education will feature more prominently in the next phase of the research.

The CAP at Lancaster has adopted an approach to guidance that encourages the integration of discrete guidance activities into their courses. This type of adaptation is particularly important because many CAP students are operating at a Pre, pre entry phase and would not feel confident or knowledgeable enough about the system to approach guidance providers. Our attitude to guidance is community based. Tutors are involved in guidance from the outset and throughout the course development and delivery. Many formal guidance providers both expect potential learners to contact them for information and advice and assume that contact made denotes interest in existing courses (Beinart and Smith 1998). In contrast to the pre-packaged mode of working, but in common with community provision, most CAP tutors report approaching potential learners to discuss their interests, so that course development is in accord with their interests. Tutors' insider knowledge of their students allows them to anticipate possible concerns about study, which they address informally in conversation or on publicity posters.

> I know exactly how they feel because I went to college when I was 35 and I thought ah I'm going to be alone as Methuselah's mother ... I'm going to be so stupid. I try to be as 'unteacher' like as possible, in a stereotypical way, we'd have a chat, not an interview but a chat, ... then we'd explain and find out what they want and take it from there (Christine 497-501, 177, 179-181).

For the community tutors it is the ethos of the tutor-student relationship that is paramount. It is the holistic notion they have of the students' study and learner support needs which reveals their transformation of formal descriptions of the guidance activities (UDACE 1985) and principles (HEQC 1995). A personalised and integrated strategy commences with tutors' initial contact with students and permeates the teaching and learning undertaken in the course. The learner centred

approach is illustrated by tutor comments from Mary who believed guidance and learner support involved 'unique sensitivity, communication and (is about) helping people...' (15-16). Whilst Rokaiya recognised the personal as well as the professional link she made with her students. 'Whether its learning or their personal lives (I am) basically giving educational guidance, (it is) me as a tutor and for me as a Muslim sister to them...' (73-76).

Rokaiya was typical of those tutors who have an understanding of their students' culture, identities and the discourses, which influence their 'ways of being in the world'. This knowledge as Lankshear explains, is not innate and the initiation process into the Discourses of a group of people is a cultural activity. However: 'Discourses themselves are, simultaneously, *means and outcomes* of cultural process' (Lankshear 1997, 17) (Italics in original). Consequently, tutors with this understanding, CAP would argue, are better placed to have that 'unique sensitivity' and deliver guidance in an appropriate way, even if that is not in obvious accord with the conventional discourse of guidance. Melissa one of the tutors described her approach as:

> just kind of chatting to them (the students) and demystifying the whole thing and saying erm, you know its going to be really relaxed, friendly and we'll give you any help that you need. ...I think most of the people wouldn't have gone into a formal situation and I don't think they'd have felt confident enough to be able to do it (23-27, 29-31).

Researching the guidance and learner support needs of CAP students has supplemented the quantitative quality assurance recording keeping data by elucidating how tutors have incorporated guidance activities of informing, advising, enabling and advocating into the teaching and learning process. For example, using the foundation credits as a teaching and learning framework, tutors facilitate students enrolled on study and investigation skill courses to obtain, analyse and synthesise information from different sources. Students learn individually, in pairs and small groups how to select evidence in order to enable them to achieve the objectives associated with an essay title, or investigation. Meanwhile, in the personal skill course students are encouraged to identify and consider how to achieve their personal goals.

It is the tutors' pedagogic approach and the principles underpinning the learning experience that affords students with an opportunity to engage with guidance activities that they might not seek out for themselves. For example, tutors recognise the need to build bridges and create links with mainstream colleges and their guidance services. However, whilst recognising the importance of publicity information, tutors seem to place greater emphasis on explaining and working with students to tease out the meaning of publicity or course material. Tutors consequently seek to enable them to make sense of the jargon and discourses of further and higher education. As Marie explained:

> you could not say well I'm the tutor this is what I'm going to put across to them, bang, bang, bang, you pick it up or you don't and it isn't a matter of them reading. ...some need more support (169-174, 180).

David refered directly to magazines and course documentation about college courses that he hands out:

> don't appear to be able to make themselves aware that there are course at places like x college. They all seem to have ears to hear but hear not, so it were (536-538, 542-543).

Obviously, a similar case to the one made here for information could, space permitting, be explored for each of the guidance activities.

When considering guidance as research, it is interesting to note that the research process has also informed and affected tutors' guidance practice in a number of ways. Initially staff development sessions provided a focus for discussion about completion of educational guidance forms and methods of identifying and addressing learners' study and support needs. Subsequently the post

course interviews allowed tutors to explore their notion of the terminology. Although incomplete the preliminary analysis of tutors' understanding of the terms, educational guidance or learner and study support indicates, that many community tutors do not use the jargon. The research is proving useful in demonstrating that they are however, instinctively providing guidance that meets many, if not all of the official criteria. If tutors, community contacts and those trusted individuals who students are more likely to interact with, find the jargon and terminology confusing, what are the implications for the 94% 'non-learners' reported not to have received guidance (Beinart and Smith 1998)?

In many ways, CAP tutors are engaged in the same activities as the students. They do not set themselves up as experts but encourage all learners to share their skills and knowledge both inside and outside sessions. For instance, a student with arthritis and limited hand movement worked with another student finding out information which they subsequently presented to the rest of their disability arts group. In another group, the tutor describes how students were asked to 'say what they learned from a practical (study) experience, what was good, what was bad about it and how they could use those skills in the future' (Betty 67-70). Despite tutor goals of encouraging learners to consider each other as possible resources their position as tutor inevitably involves issues of power. The impact of power on the student tutor relationship varies according to the group and the nature of existing relationships between participants before the course. Although not as obvious as in a conventional guidance setting, where a potential learner is seeking out information and advice from an expert, CAP tutors are nevertheless, seen by many students as knowing best.

Whilst instinctively working within guidance principles like learner centredness, accessibility and equal opportunities, it is apparent that tutors are also seeking to move learners to a position of becoming more autonomous in terms of their own learning. One persistent problem is when the rhetoric clashes with the practical reality of the guidance delivered. As an institution with the power to know, some would argue that by subscribing to quality assurance procedure outlined by HEQC a university sets itself an unrealistic and arguably an inappropriate goal. For those students who are operating at the Pre, pre entry phase (Oglesby and Houghton 1997) a team of guidance specialists is not necessarily the answer. However welcoming as tutors working with students with a disability explained 'they need to be able to trust us, before they will talk to you'(44-45). Delia the interpreter of a course for adults who are deaf or hearing impaired highlighted some of the practical linguistic dilemmas arising from translation that her group had to overcome:

> It depends on them and their level of English. ...(x) the community contact understands a lot of the concepts, ... whereas another deaf person who is purely signing wouldn't pick out key words. ...when I interpreted that (educational guidance) before for (x) I was wondering if I was signing that properly (198, 201-204, 48-50).

These are just two of the many issues that are not necessarily addressed by the rhetoric of government initiatives. Consequently, although impressive, initiatives like the free national phone line, Learning Direct may fail because there is an expectation and assumption that learners have already started their journey and have picked up certain capabilities along the way.

The paper has sought to demonstrate the complexity and fascinating relationship between guidance as research, teaching and learning. The images created in a kaleidoscope are ever changing and I am conscious that there are myriad representations still to emerge as the individual activities are examined by others looking from a different perspective. One image of the kaleidoscope shows that guidance is about one to one, face to face sessions with those who work within HEQC guiding principles and using the UDACE activities. However, twist the kaleidoscope and alternative, perhaps for some even more appropriate, representations come into view.

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Compartments, connections and consciousness: changing perspectives on a learning journey

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Introduction

> *The biography of an individual, like the genealogy of a concept, is always a story about unity through diversity, continuity through change*
> (Carr, 1995: 19).

> *Autobiographical research and writing, in enabling researchers to link the personal and the structural, individual life-histories and collective social movements, and public and private worlds, can be seen as central to the social scientific enterprise*
> (Boud and Miller, 1996: 6).

Am I the same person (the one token housewife with young children) who was offered a place on a new MEd in Continuing Education almost twenty years ago? Was she the same person who, ten years earlier, fresh from a degree in psychology, had walked tentatively into a classroom as a student teacher? What relationship did both those persons have to the part-time tutor/co-ordinator who, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, ran training courses for school governors and staff development programmes in community education?

How did all three coalesce to become an academic charged not just with 'doing' education but with writing about it in a form judged acceptable as research output and worthy reading for a new generation of MEd students? When did the erstwhile psychology student realise it was OK to stop writing passive/objective phrases like 'The apparatus was set up' and to introduce papers with the word 'I'?

If, as Boud and Miller (1996: 6) indicate, the autobiographical I is now legitimate currency within the social scientific enterprise, I suspect that opening a paper with a circular series of questions may not be! Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to do so since not only were the questions above prompted by pondering the conference title but, in trying to answer them through reflective writing and discussion in another forum, I have become increasingly aware of the circular nature of the relationship between my own learning, teaching and research activities.

Over the past few years, I have been heavily involved in the processes of reflective practice (Schon, 1983), a key tenet of which is that professionals should seek to articulate their theories-in-use: the often unacknowledged ideas, connections and assumptions that shape their practice. In my own case, as an educator whose students are themselves educators/trainers of other adults, attempting to articulate the connections between what and how I have learned, how I teach, and what I present in a research forum is now an essential part of my practice and something that I also try to facilitate for others.

Rather than discussing connections between learning, teaching and research in the abstract, therefore, I intend to approach this paper through what Brookfield (1995) would term the 'lens of my own autobiography'. I shall also draw on the documented experiences of former students. The key question I want to address is whether it is possible to connect directly with, and in what terms one can speak about, that which both links 'public and private worlds' (Boud and Miller, as above) and provides 'unity through diversity, continuity through change' (Carr, as above).

Modelling connections

This question has been formulated relatively recently in a learning journey which has taken me from being a fairly passive mature student, through active involvement in the politics of participation, to a point where I now embrace the principles of 'participative knowing' (Skolimowski, 1985) and, especially, the need to define and locate the 'self'. I suspect that debate about the latter can usefully be contextualised in terms of what constitutes consciousness and spirit. I shall conclude this paper by describing a model which may be helpful in this respect and which can perhaps also provide an alternative viewpoint both to a modernist perspective founded upon differentiation and compartmentalisation (which creates separate entities and hierarchies of research, teaching and learning) and to the 'anything goes' fragmentation and uncertainties of post-modernism.

I shall begin, however, with a simple and probably less contentious model of possible connections between learning, teaching and research, assuming for the moment that there is a qualitative difference between these activities.

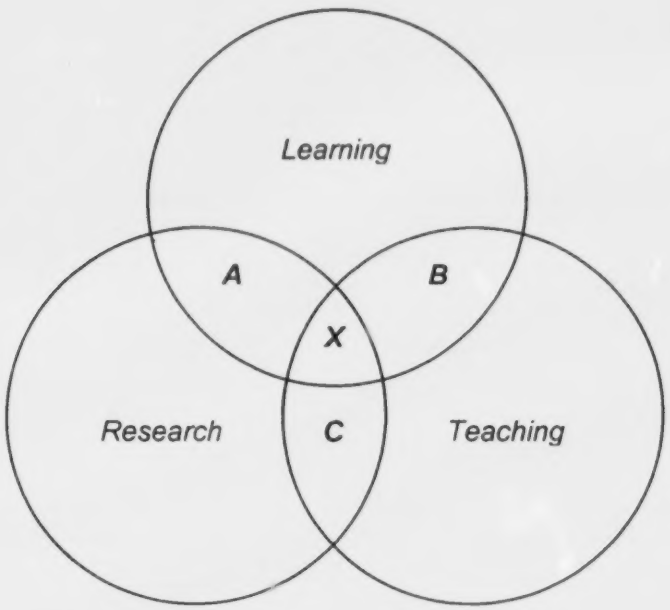

Figure 1. Learning, teaching, research:
compartments and connections

A number of statements can be made about the apparent interconnections shown in Figure 1. In respect of the Learning circle and its overlap at points A and B with the Research and Teaching circles, I could claim:

I learn and I research my learning and I teach from my learning.

Of the Teaching circle and its overlaps at points B and C, I could claim:

I teach and I research my teaching and I learn from my teaching.

And, similarly, of the Research circle, I could claim:

I research and I learn from my research and I teach from my research.

Figure 1 makes the connections look real and convincing and, at times when I have consciously undertaken reflective practice within a properly structured framework, the claims to which it lends

itself might have some validity. However, for most of my professional career in adult/community education I do not recollect having given much thought either to naming the specific activity in which I was engaged at any one time or to how it might connect with other named activities: I just got on with it.

Perhaps the pressure to separate and define what constitutes learning, teaching or research, and then to re-conceptualise the relationships between them, is a peculiarity of academia where promotion still largely depends upon compartmentalising one's work under various headings which privilege what can be placed in the research circle. Perhaps this in itself is merely another manifestation of the reductionist, quantitative, paradigm that has characterised much of Western science. Perhaps such issues are not even important!

Whether they are important or not, in general I continue to find that the everyday process of 'getting on' with activities takes little account of 'academic' questions about the particular nature or definition of activities. In terms of Figure 1, I sense that I habitually operate in the kind of black hole represented at its centre (X) where separate identification is lost. I will attempt to illustrate this with reference to some real events.

Real-life connections

A colleague recently asked me for information, to include in a booklet on the history of our department, about a range of training programmes for school governors and in community education which were initiated in the 1970s and ran throughout the 1980s at a time when the notion of 'education for participation' was influential and lifelong learning was a new buzz-word.

I spent a nostalgic hour with some files whose existence I had virtually forgotten but in which lay several articles, photographs and other information that constitute part of my life-history, particularly in the sense of having given shape to my professional career. They also provide metaphorical snapshots of periods in the lives of students whose history and development became entwined with my own. In reminiscing, I realised that for a few years our individual stories had merged to form another, collective, one from which it would be almost impossible to disentangle who had learned what from whom, who had been the 'teacher' and who the 'taught', and which of our activities might be defined as research; it would be difficult, too, to identify exactly where any of these things fused with educational policy-making.

Stories entwined

The progress of one particular student, partially encapsulated in the following extract from a newspaper article, may help to exemplify this complexity:

> ... She had a handful of dusty A-level certificates when she started the Sheffield community education course (a one-year certificate) as a parent in 1981. Now, at 46, she has a PhD in psychology and a growing reputation as an authority on dyslexia. Her transformation stemmed from the discovery in 1980 that M, her five-year-old son, was dyslexic. 'I went home and wondered what to do about it. I realised I didn't know enough about dyslexia or about how children are taught.'
>
> The Sheffield course was her first attempts to fill the gaps. 'I loved the research, being able to choose what I wanted to do ... I also enjoyed thinking about the link between The ideology and what actually goes on.'
>
> From researching dyslexia on the course, A went on to take a degree in psychology, and then a doctorate. 'I think it helped a great deal that I was involved in M's problems in a more academic way. As I gained more knowledge the school began to take more notice of me. My

> research moved from being a means to finding out more to a means of achieving more. My concerns fed back into helping M in a more structured way.
> (Buckley, 1991: 21).

A is now an international expert on dyslexia and has a direct influence not only on its diagnosis and treatment but on the related policies of educational institutions. I currently meet her more often in the pages of academic journals than I do in person but, in 1981 when we were neighbours with children of roughly the same age, I played an active role in encouraging her to take part in the community education course.

At that time, I was part-way through an MEd, undertaken for interest when my eldest child started school: it had given me confidence to stand for election there as a parent-governor. Chatting in this capacity to other parents, I had identified a need for parents to know more about the education system and had set up a local discussion group at which headteachers, education officers, local councillors and others had become regular speakers. The membership of the discussion group, and its intended and unintended outcomes, subsequently formed the basis for my MEd dissertation which focused on what happened to women when their children started school. This resulted in several research publications and an invitation to teach on the university's school-governor training courses.

I discovered that, like myself, many parents had become governors in an attempt to support their children but that, in the process, they had often become interested in pursuing educational issues in their own right. Then (as now) there were few opportunities for those not already employed in education to attend courses on education: the certificate course in community education was an attempt to fill this gap.

A joined the course after attending the parents' discussion group and becoming disillusioned by the apparent lack of interest in dyslexia displayed by several speakers who wielded considerable influence in local schools. At several meetings over our respective kitchen tables she showed me the growing pile of notes she was acquiring in an attempt to understand and take action over her son's learning difficulties. I suggested that she pursue this interest under academic supervision and in a structured way which might also provide her with a qualification.

Not only did she do so, as noted above, but she later returned to the certificate and associated courses as an occasional tutor in order to raise awareness about dyslexia; currently I draw on her published work in the MEd course which I now direct. I could not begin to disentangle the historical threads of our respective learning, teaching and research.

The same is true of links with another student mentioned in Buckley's article: F, 'who had left school at 15' and 'felt he was lacking essential knowledge' to help his eight-year-old son. Buckley notes:

> On the course F found his interest developing beyond the immediate practicalities of his son's schooling. From his initial curiosity ... F found himself joining the executive committee of North-east Derbyshire's Community Education Council.

Such Councils, some comprising up to fifty representatives of local communities, were a major plank in the implementation of Derbyshire's community education policy. They controlled a substantial part of the county's education budget and were empowered to make funding available for educational activities locally. F was ultimately instrumental in shaping several of these. He later also provided me with valuable introductions to key local people which enabled me to undertake research into the work of the Community Education Councils.

Iterative cycles

To provide further evidence of iterative cycles of research, learning and teaching where the beginnings and endings of each are never clearly distinguishable, it is worth noting that this research had itself been prompted by what I had earlier learned about the Councils' work while I was teaching

on a staff development programme for Community Tutors who had played a major part in helping to establish the Councils.

In a previous SCUTREA paper (Hunt, 1995), I documented how the work of the Councils had eventually been brought to an end as a result of changes in national politics. I noted that I had felt humbled at that time by the receipt of a phone call from a councillor whom I had long regarded as a powerful figure. With his voice full of emotion he had telephoned immediately after a turbulent meeting, at which it had been decided that the Councils could no longer be sustained, to say 'I know you can't do anything about it but you do know what's been going on here. Can you tell people about what we tried to do?'. This councillor's belief in the power of the written word and, implicitly, in that of the university, gave me a new perspective on the nature of research and what might be expected of me as a researcher.

In the 1995 paper, I was attempting to articulate and, to some extent, justify my own transition from community educator to 'academic'. I drew on the words of an MEd student which had helped me to delineate my new role: 'I need you to provide a context in which I can challenge, and validate, my work, my beliefs and my professional practices'. I argued that the function of an academic as both tutor and researcher is to provide a framework through which to reflect back to individuals and communities what already exists in a form which can be challenged, changed or celebrated. Debate about what constitutes learning, teaching and research and how they may be connected clearly fits such a framework!

Black hole, new light?

Such debate, however, does not necessarily address the felt-reality of the black hole represented at 'X' in Figure 1 where words and activities lose their apparently separate identities. I suggest that this is the realm of the 'self', the place where ideas and experiences are absorbed, often apparently beyond the reach of the conscious mind, and from which they re-emerge as subjective knowledge. This place is a 'world within' which, though it frequently manifests itself in thought and behaviour, seems enormously difficult to enter. As Peck (1990: 54) puts it:

> Examination of the world without is never as personally painful as examination of the world within, and it is certainly because of the pain involved in a life of genuine self-examination that the majority steer away from it.

I am increasingly drawn to the view that this 'world within' is where not only are Boud and Miller's 'public and private worlds' mediated but Carr's 'unity through diversity, continuity through change' can be located.

Figure 2 is an attempt to represent this in diagrammatic form. It is based on a model, largely derived from Eastern philosophical traditions, that I have found useful in attempting to address the question of what constitutes the 'self'. For ease of discussion I shall use the first person plural in describing it and its implications. However, I readily acknowledge that the model is not unproblematic, and that it may not be acceptable within other people's philosophical frameworks.

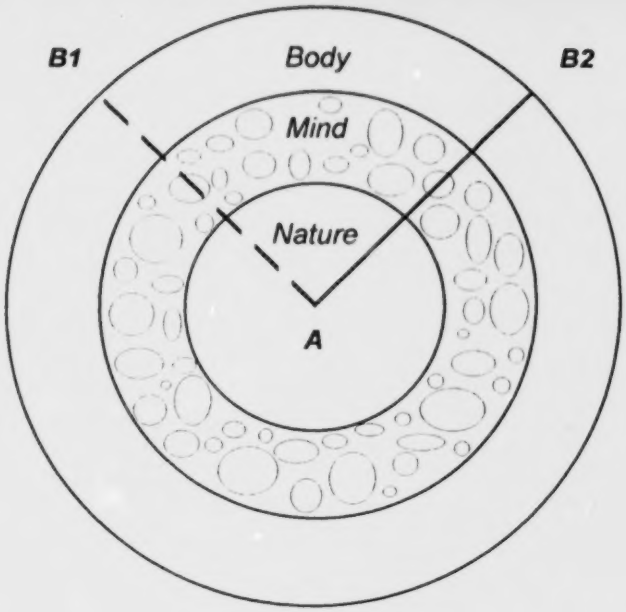

Figure 2. Locating an unchanging self within changing ideas and behaviour patterns

Try to imagine, nevertheless, that a line from A to B represents the 'life-force' that upholds our physical being. We will each have grown up attributing different names to it but what we call it matters less than how it seems to manifest itself in the physical world. For present purposes, imagine that the line operates like the beam of a powerful torch, illuminating and making us aware of everything in and near its path. The inner circle represents our innermost nature, the attributes we bring with us into the world and a link with whatever it is that gives and sustains life. The middle circle encompasses the realm of the mind, containing all the ideas, values and beliefs (represented by the blobs) that we accumulate during the process of our lives. The outer circle denotes the physical world of the body.

The body has to be activated by the life-force in order to do anything but what it does and how it does it will be dependent upon both the nature of the person 'inhabiting' the body and the content and number of the mind-blobs that are lit up at any one time. The effect of the latter can sometimes be dramatic. Imagine, for example, that the broken A-B1 line represents you on the way home at the end of a long working day. Some of the lighted dots may contain ideas about how tired you are, how you are going to collapse on the sofa, how you deserve a drink, and how much more worthy you are than Z who always goes home early. Physically, your eyes and head may be lowered, your shoulders bent, your pace slow.

Now picture walking through your front door to find the phone ringing. On the line is a good friend whom you have not seen for a while, inviting you out for a meal. It is likely that your body language will change in response, not because you have consciously chosen to change it but because a completely different set of mind-blobs has suddenly been lit up. They have activated a different physical behaviour pattern and, in terms of Figure 2, 'you' are now represented by the strong A-B2 line.

Demonstrably, therefore, when we say 'I am ...' (tired, a teacher, or whatever it may be) we speak only a partial truth: essentially, we invest all of our life-force, all that is 'I', in something that is clearly so much smaller than that. Not only do the unlit areas of the mind effectively not exist at any given moment, thereby allowing us to hold conflicting views quite comfortably, but we rarely notice

the lighting-up process: for the most part, we merely react to what the light is shining on, thinking that is what we are. Even more significant, I suggest, is our general neglect of the 'A' which appears to give rise, through the agency of the mind-blobs, to all the 'B's of our behaviour patterns.

Though behaviourists might argue that what I have described as a torch beam has no inner source, that it originates not at a mysterious 'A' point but as a consequence of an individual's interaction with her/his physical environment, it does not seem appropriate to dismiss entirely the possibility of an 'inner reality', a connection with a dimension of human existence which words and intellectual debate cannot penetrate but which itself enters and sustains 'everyday' life. Indeed, such a possibility, of a dimension generally referred to in terms of 'spirit', lies at the root of many of the world's great philosophical traditions (Huxley, 1946).

Conclusion

In this last section I have briefly attempted to address my own felt-reality of a 'world within' which houses my individual experiences, ideas, feelings and behaviours. Through the processes of reflection I can sometimes identify in words the origins and effects of these, and how, through personal and professional interactions in private and public domains, they have become intertwined with those of others to become my theories-in-use. But I sense that there is something beyond both the words and the activities and events which they describe - and that this is not 'mine' but a universal, a shared attribute of humanity. It is possible to connect with it cognitively through philosophical literature which addresses the concepts of spirit and consciousness, and in the form of diagrams which attempt to locate and determine relationships even in arguing back when what is being located has no physical substance; connection can also be made in other ways through, for example, meditation and similar practices.

I offer Figure 2 and the discussion associated with it as a coda to a paper on connections between research, teaching and learning for two reasons. First, to provide a focus for debate which moves beyond the structures and compartments of modernism and the isolated individualism of post-modernism into a different framework. Second, to suggest that whether, or when, we call ourselves 'learners', 'teachers' or 'researchers', and what, exactly, the associated activities are, or the connections between them, it matters far less than, literally, the spirit in which we live and work.

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Getting connected: involving part-time tutors of adults in researching their own development.

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The problem.

Decisions about what constitutes appropriate staff development and training for part-time tutors of adults are normally taken by those who are structurally removed from them. They may manage such staff or have a specific staff-development brief. In the latter instance they may have a vested interest in the continuation of a system in which they may have become acknowledged experts. In the former, it may be difficult for them to initiate a dialogue with part-time tutors when at the end of the day – or at least at the end of the term! – they have the power to hire and fire.

As a manager and trainer of part-time adult educators in the Local Authority sector, I was aware that, despite adult learning principles of learner autonomy and involvement, those tutors were not in a position to materially affect the training and development which they received. I began to question whether what they were offered, which I myself was involved in delivering, was appropriate. How did we as managers and trainers know that the staff-development programme was really what part-time tutors needed and wanted? Indeed, did the part-time tutors themselves know what they needed and wanted? When a set menu is on offer, and nothing outside that menu has been experienced, how can we begin to imagine what else we might try, and whether we would like it if we tried it? Perhaps all we can imagine is spam, eggs and chips without the spam.

I therefore decided to involve a group of part-time tutors in an exploration into what might constitute for them effective professional support and development. By adopting an action research approach, we would be setting up a cycle of planning, action, reflection and further planning which mirrors Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Underpinning the project, therefore, is a recognition of the educative purpose and nature of research. The educative purpose of research is customarily seen in terms of increasing the knowledge base; its educative nature, however, is reflected in the researcher(s) learning from both the product and the process of research.

Methodology

One of the key concerns addressed in this research project was to uncover the meanings which part-time tutors themselves brought to and derived from the training, staff development and professional support which they experienced. This constructivist approach presupposed a qualitative rather than a quantitative research design. Therefore the project was set up as a case-study, within which the research questions concerning the effectiveness of professional development and support were addressed through a series of action research cycles or spirals, a 'recursive rather than linear research process', which, as Sharon Nodie Oja and Lisa Smulyan point out, 'allows practitioners to use their own reflections, understandings, and developing theories to inform both practice and research.' (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p16).

Fourteen tutors at the Centre which I managed volunteered for the project and remained actively engaged throughout the period of almost three years over which the study extended. During that time, they met termly as two groups – one in the daytime, the other in the evening – time-tabled to fit into busy working schedules. These meetings provided the forum within which the techniques of professional support and development tried out during the previous term were analysed and the projects for the coming term decided.

Any findings resulting from such a small-scale qualitative study must necessarily remain tentative. Moreover, because participants in the project were all volunteers, there is no control over just how representative these individuals were of part-time tutors in general. Nevertheless, strengths of the study to some extent help to balance these limitations; the longitudinal nature of the project enabled checks on internal consistency to take place, and the fact that the part-time tutors were volunteers

meant that one of the fundamental principles of adult education – its voluntary nature – was being observed within the research approach.

A further methodological limitation concerns my own role within the project, which was not simply that of key researcher. I also line-managed all of the tutors who participated, and had trained some of them as part of my Service-wide staff development role. Thus the study was contaminated by existing relationships between myself and the other participants. However, those existing relationships might well at least partly explain why these tutors volunteered for the project in the first place.

The approach to the study was cross-curricular in nature, with members of the case-study groups coming from different subject areas. This proved to be an advantage, as it encouraged a focus on generic issues surrounding teaching and learning, something noted also in the survey of part-time tutors carried out by Graham et al.

> Although a fair proportion had experienced a variety of subject based courses previously there was little doubt that trainees definitely approved of general training... 'It doesn't matter what the subject... the teaching problems are basically the same' Moreover, it was considered to be positively beneficial to be working alongside teachers from different specialisms and backgrounds.
> (Graham, Daines, Sullivan, Harris and Baum, 1982, p149)

Twelve of the fourteen participants were women, and this represented an even greater imbalance than that suggested by the ratio of part-time tutors in the Centre as a whole, where women constituted 70% of the population.

Learning from research

As previously indicated, action research is an experiential learning process, and as such can itself be an effective staff development method. This is increasingly recognised in the literature. (Jacullo-Noto, 1988, McNiff, 1988, Lomax, 1995). It is seen as particularly effective in involving participants in examining aspects of their professional lives, preferably with the support of colleagues who share the same purpose. The outcomes which result are therefore those perceived by the 'insiders', a necessary perspective sometimes neglected by those carrying out traditional positivistic research, and therefore also by those devising staff development programmes based on such research. However, Pamela Lomax warns that this strength of action research also has its down-side.

> A strength of action research is that practitioners have a subjective understanding of the issues; a problem with this is that it is difficult to see things objectively. (Lomax, 1995, p54)

One way of encouraging a greater level of objectivity is by ensuring that action research is a collegial rather than an individual activity, so that perceptions are mirrored and modified by others with similar experiences. O'Neil and Marsick see this collegiality in terms of 'working in small groups to solve problems...Projects are meaningful to each person involved in the programme. Solutions are those over which reasonable people can disagree.' (O'Neil and Marsick, 1994, p19)

Within the current project, action research played a complex role. First of all, it formed the underpinning methodology for the case study, through which participants explored the effectiveness of a range of professional support and development techniques. Secondly, as the study progressed and a climate of trust and openness evolved within the groups, a further action research cycle became established. Participants began to share problems of practice and to devise and subsequently evaluate ways of tackling them. These twin action research cycles created a rich learning environment for the part-time tutors which was firmly grounded in practice – something which from the start they had universally agreed was important. The developmental nature of the experience is echoed in the study carried out by Jacullo-Noto, which, although based in a school setting, has some similarities to the

current study. She noted that two of her three groups 'reported that this project had been an unmatched growth opportunity.' (Jacullo-Noto, 1988, pp68-9)

The results for the part-time tutors in the current case study also echo some of the Jacullo-Noto outcomes, and include an increase in confidence, and in awareness of their own professionalism. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Jacullo-Noto study was the perception by participants that development for teachers is much more a matter of generic and process issues, rather than it being limited to and by a product focus.

> Their realisation that development can be process-oriented, rather than product-oriented, was the most dramatic outcome for them.
> (Jacullo-Noto, 1988, p70)

This observation is again reinforced by the findings of the current study, where the benefits of a cross-curricular approach which encouraged a concentration on the broader issues of teaching and learning was recognised by the participants. There was also evidence of a shift to a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning and an increase in critical awareness and reflectivity.

A range of professional support and development techniques was suggested and tried out by participants in the case study over the life of the project. That a range of activities was devised was important, as it allowed for individual preferences and learning styles to be catered for. It also meant that because the tutors themselves were involved in the decision making as to what activities were to be undertaken and where and when they were to take place, they maintained a sense of ownership over the whole process. Activities were therefore perceived as relevant, and responding to their wants and needs.

However, it was membership of the case-study groups themselves, and the discussions around problems of practice in particular, which participants consistently identified as having been the most significant experience of the project, both as regards learning and development, and in terms of providing professional support. It is significant that the groups were not specifically set up with the intention that they become support groups; they actually developed along those lines. This indicates that it was something those part-time tutors wanted and needed, even though they were perhaps not consciously aware of it from the beginning. However, it is suggested that for a group to become a supportive environment for its members, there are certain prerequisites in the way that it is set up. It would be most difficult to envisage a successful support group as something which could be imposed upon people. The spirit of trust and openness which it depends on is much more likely to result from a voluntary undertaking which participants feel ownership of.

The case-study participants were indeed volunteers. Moreover, because the whole purpose of the project was to explore what constituted effective professional support and development for part-time tutors, all activity was designed around, and as often as possible, by the tutors themselves. This encouraged a sense of ownership amongst group members.
A further important factor is that the project was long-term rather than short-term, and support groups need time to evolve if they are to be fully effective. However, longevity isn't enough. It is not simply a matter of how long the group has been in existence that is decisive in whether or not it evolves into a support group, but the type and quality of relationships which develop within the group. For a tutor to feel sufficiently at ease to talk freely and openly depends on having the confidence that group members wish to help and would in no way use the information gained to undermine that tutor. This need for time and an appropriate dynamic for openness and trust to grow is corroborated by the Group for Collective Inquiry, who noted after a considerable period as co-researchers:

> We learned (and are still learning) how to participate with each other. Respect and openness cannot be mandated; they need to be established through experience.
> (Group for Collaborative Inquiry, 1994, p61)

A final factor which may well have contributed to the effectiveness of the case study groups as support groups concerns the numbers involved. Participants pointed out that they did not believe that the level of openness required to explore problems of practice would have been achieved if the groups had been larger. And the literature supports the suggestion that members of small groups find it easier and quicker to get to know and identify with each other (Gosling, 1985).

A range of factors, therefore, contributed to the climate of openness and trust within the groups which enabled the sharing of problems of practice to take place. This was a process which participants found particularly beneficial. First of all, it illustrated for them that problems which in their professional isolation they thought were unique to them were in fact shared by others. Secondly, the problems of practice were generated by and therefore directly related to their work situations. They were therefore relevant and potentially rich learning resources. Finally, the process encouraged them to critically reflect upon and then propose ways of improving their practice.

The ability to reflect is a skill essential to effective experiential learning and action research. It enables us as teachers of adults to make sense of our experience;

> Experience alone does not make a person a professional adult educator. The person must also be able to reflect deeply upon the experience he or she has had. (Elias and Merriam, 1980, p9)

By reflecting on their teaching, participants in the case study were therefore taking part in a process which had the potential to stimulate professional development. The supportive climate of the groups and the consideration of problems of practice encouraged members to become reflective practitioners in the Schonian sense, moving through a process of reflecting-on-action towards the self-critical self-developer involved in reflection-in-action.

Although there was a recognition on the part of some members of the case study that they had previously reflected on their practice, albeit in an unconscious and/or unsystematic way, there was acknowledgement that without a stimulus and a framework for reflection, it was largely ineffective as a means of encouraging professional development. The fact that a time and place were set aside for reflection ensured that it took place and that actions were decided upon and followed up. The involvement of a significant other or others in this process resulted in feelings of commitment which again ensured that reflection took place and led to action.

Reflection was not something encouraged by the group meetings alone. The other techniques of professional support and development devised and carried out by the participants also contributed to the process. These included peer observation, the videoing of teaching sessions, a series of one-to-one evaluatory/reflective interviews with myself and one-off training sessions arranged to meet needs which the part-time tutors themselves had identified.

Observation of the teaching of part-time adult educators is something which forms part of most courses leading to teaching qualifications in the sector, but which appears to happen rarely outside that context. In the programmes surveyed by Graham et al there were opportunities for observation by peers and trainers during micro-teaching, and observation of actual teaching sessions occurred with trainers or occasionally Centre Heads visiting trainee tutors. (Graham et al, 1982, pp165-6). Observation in the context of such programmes tends to be regarded as a means of assessment rather than as a technique with staff development potential. The tutor who is being observed receives feedback but the tendency is to regard that feedback as judgement on the teaching which has taken place rather than as a supportive developmental tool.
The decision by the case-study participants to extend the technique to paired peer observation was an imaginative development based on the fact that a majority of them had experienced micro-teaching and observation as part of their initial training. They had found it useful to get an 'outside' perspective on their teaching and on the student learning which was taking place, a benefit also noted by the respondents to Graham et al.

Peer observation was clearly something which participants believed they benefited from, and the subsequent discussions within the groups and one-to-one with myself indicated that the experience encouraged them to look critically at their own teaching from a range of perspectives. It was apparent that both being observed and an observer led to this process of self-reflection, an outcome supported by Kilbourn's study of graduate teachers when he notes:

> teachers frequently report that in the process of observing, discussing, and reflecting on another teacher's practice, they learn as much about their own teaching as they do that of the person observed. (Kilbourn, 1988, p95)

However, just as reflection 'is not automatic' but 'has to be learned' (Collins, 1991, p46), so the skills of observing and being observed need to be developed if tutors are to maximise their learning from the technique. Problems which the case-study participants grappled with included the inevitable selectivity of perception, the difficulty of giving and receiving constructive feedback, and observer effect.

Later in the study, as confidence and critical awareness grew, the part-time tutors extended the use of teaching observations to videoing their teaching sessions. It was recognised that analysing the video would enable the tutor to personally observe teaching technique and student response rather than depending on verbal or written feedback filtered through the perceptions of a third party, no matter how empathic. And indeed it proved a very powerful way of enabling these tutors to quite literally look at themselves in their professional roles, and provided a wealth of material for critical reflection and self-evaluation.

However, the study also indicated the importance of setting such a process within a group context where support and challenge were balanced in such a way as to encourage development. (Daloz, 1987, p214). It was clear from the reaction of some of the participants that the experience of actually seeing oneself teaching a class can be a traumatic and painful one. As one tutor pointed out:

> The negative sides come out rather than the positive sides, don't they? We can always think of the negatives.

Sharing the experience with supportive and constructive colleagues provided a sense of perspective and proportion which prevented self-criticism from becoming disempowering. Furthermore, sharing the video meant that a tutor could benefit from alternative perspectives and interpretations, and sometimes recognise the significance of something that s/he had looked at but not 'really seen'. Brookfield confirms the value of setting the process of critical reflection within a group setting (Brookfield, 1986, pp 135-6), and elsewhere he describes the 'critical helper' role which members of the case-study groups adopted.

> This is how critical helpers function; they are mirrors who help us interpret and question our ideas and actions from a new viewpoint...Encouraging people to probe their assumptions, without taking them to the point at which this probing threatens their self-esteem, is a crucial helping task.
> Brookfield, 1987, 29-31)

While the ways so far described in which participants explored their practice helped to stimulate reflection, other techniques undertaken similarly encouraged analysis of practice. In particular, the one-to-one interviews with myself, three of which were held over the life of the project, focused on evaluation and reflection, and on action planning.

The project, therefore, presented these part-time tutors of adults with an opportunity to research both staff development and their own practice. In doing so, they also embarked upon a learning opportunity which led to professional and personal change. What they –and I – discovered was that

reflective action research intimately bound up in practice is a professionally developmental process which avoids the research/practice split highlighted by Usher and Bryant:

> Adult education as a field of study has systematically failed to recognize practical knowledge and the mode of understanding associated with it. Since it is the latter which characterizes adult education as a field of practice, this means that the study of adult education does not actually relate to the practice of adult education.
> (Usher and Bryant, 1989, 178-9).

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The contribution of teaching, textual interpretation and pedagogical research to understanding the development of critical consciousness.

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Introduction

It is easy to see how research into teaching and learning benefits the teaching process; the contribution made by subject-specialist research to improving teaching can be more difficult to prove. Yet, as adult educators, many of us are passionate enthusiasts for our subject-specialisms. Indeed, this enthusiasm may have led us to become adult educators in the first place. Nevertheless, I suspect I am not alone in feeling guilty about devoting research and scholarly activity time to a consideration of my subject (English/Cultural Studies).

This has to be partly because research time is at such a premium in post-1992 universities like mine that many staff feel it is a privilege rather than work. Such circumstances can prompt staff to focus their efforts on the obviously applied and relevant - policy and evaluation research, for example. But these feelings of guilt are also fuelled by the uncomfortable status of Literature as a subject. Although huge claims have been made for English as *the* key civilising, liberal and broadening subject (see Thomas, 1991, for a summary of these claims) there has also been a school of thought in adult education which dismissed such studies as the:

> soft subjects of workers' education, stigmatised as 'women's subjects', seen at best as a mere diversion from the class struggle or at worst as the vehicles of bourgeois ideology, clothed in the snake's skin of 'spiritual values'. (Steele, 1997, pp.11-12)

In fact, it has been seen almost as a recreational pursuit. Thomas's study (1990; 1991) reports statements from academics describing English as a refuge for women students who lack serious professional or academic ambitions.

For these reasons - the limited availability of resources for research and the assumption from some quarters that the study of Literature is a leisure pursuit - I felt unable to undertake research into Literature for the sheer pleasure of it. But I did not want to confine myself to research into teaching and learning, needing also to feed my subject specialist enthusiasms. I looked, therefore, for a way to combine the two.

This paper discusses the pedagogical implications of some recently completed research which emerged from my need to synthesise subject specialist and educational research. The project was a form of action research which encompassed the development and delivery of a Cultural Studies curriculum for women returners. The process of data collection took place over a two year period, during which time the curriculum in question was delivered. Research participants kept detailed journals and were interviewed at two points during the course. My co-teachers and I kept observation notes on all sessions and I undertook detailed subject discipline research concurrently, making thematic analyses of the texts my students were studying.

The research set out to investigate the radical potential of literary study. It sought to examine the development of 'critical consciousness' in the participants, resulting from their reflective engagement with popular texts (romantic fiction) and with other texts, such as 'Jane Eyre' which could be defined as more conventionally literary. I use the term 'critical consciousness' here to indicate a recognition of relationships between individual circumstances and political and social structures; one which contextualises personal experience, seeing it as social and historical as well as political. Critical consciousness implies, moreover, a particular attitude to knowledge, one which understands that

knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted and perceives the power inherent in 'naming the world' (Freire, 1997). The research identified changes in participants' beliefs about the world and about knowledge which could be attributed, at least in part, to their shared, close, critical encounters with literature. The research also revealed that, in addition to this politicisation process, the study of these texts led to the development of a number of transferable critical thinking skills.

This paper reports some of the research's findings which have implications for teaching English/Cultural Studies. It begins by considering its identification of the role of 'generative themes' in the teaching of literature, then goes on to look at the impact on students' thinking and understanding of practising structural, linguistic and textual analysis. I use the terms 'English,' 'Literature' and 'Cultural Studies' almost interchangeably in this paper. The course in question could be said to incorporate elements of all three. I am aware of the distinctions often drawn between these subjects and of the many debates engendered by a consideration of these terms. However, the research findings under discussion in this paper could be considered relevant to all these subjects and it would not be helpful to scrutinise these distinctions and debates here.

Generative Themes

The research enabled me to appreciate that the politicisation my students experienced could be understood in terms of literature's capacity to promote engagement with what Freire calls 'generative themes' (Freire, 1972, chapter four). He uses the term to describe a concrete issue or situation which can be used as the basis for a dialectical engagement with learners about aspects of their own oppression. Such engagements should lead to 'conscientisation' - the development of critical consciousness. The exploration of 'generative themes' reveals contradictions inherent in the oppressive myths and practices which constitute the fabric of learners' daily experiences. Freire argued that this enables those engaged in dialogue about these themes to identify the oppressive nature of these beliefs and move on towards alternative conceptualisations of reality.

The concept of the 'generative theme' grew in significance as the research progressed. I needed a framework for understanding the relationship between studying Literature, critical reflection and radical anti-oppressive education. I came to realise, through the research process, that the phenomenon I had noted as a teacher - that studying the romance (and other forms of literature) often changed and politicised students - could be understood as occurring as a result of their engagement with such themes. This understanding developed as a ***result*** of undertaking the research; the original curriculum on which the research focused had not been designed to explore the hypothesis that literature teaching can use 'generative themes' to promote 'critical consciousness'. One of the inferences which can be drawn from the research is that, where the promotion of 'critical consciousness' is a central purpose of a curriculum, sessions focusing specifically on 'generative themes' are likely to secure these objectives. It would be interesting to undertake new research to examine what happens where a curriculum operates predominantly in this way.

In fact, we approached the romances in many different ways, rather than focusing systematically on 'generative themes'. However, even within the more eclectic approach taken in this curriculum, I was able to identify that students engaged fiercely with issues, embedded within the texts themselves, which engendered passionate debate precisely because they exposed some of the contradictory beliefs which helped to construct the participants' understanding of themselves as women. In other words, they homed in on their own 'generative themes'. I also undertook detailed analyses of the texts the students were studying, in order to identify and explore 'generative themes' in these texts. This subject specialist research made a critical contribution to my developing understanding about the educational potential of using 'generative themes' when studying this kind of popular culture. It revealed romantic fiction's capacity to highlight the contradictory nature of a range of beliefs and value systems which may constrain women's understanding of themselves and their places in the world.

It did this by focusing on specific themes within the popular romance, showing their capacity to pinpoint the contradictions inherent in many of our beliefs and expectations about women. Romantic

fiction is a genre characterised by contradiction and by contradictory readings (see Modleski, 1982; Thurston, 1987; Belsey, 1994, for an indication of the range of perspectives on the subject). I looked at the contradictions surrounding its representations of eating and body-image, linking these with the arguments of writers like Malson (1998) and Eichenbaum and Orbach (1986) who identify many contradictory social beliefs about women's bodies and appetites. I noted also that the genre has a difficult relationship with women's place in the public and private spheres, seeing working women as positive role models *and* something less than 'real' women. I collated information about the romance's construction of the heroine as both subject and object. Heroines are subjects - we see through their eyes and trespass on their thoughts. Many look at heroes as objects of desire, creatures for consumption. The novels present a struggle, however, in which heroines resist, with varying degrees of success, the objectifying gaze of the male and his efforts to control them in other ways. The discussion of such a theme has the potential to prompt examination of the extent to which male/female power relations are constructed through the opposition subject/object and the implications for gender relations which follow from its dissolution. This combination of empirical fieldwork and detailed textual analyses meant I could identify a number of potentially fruitful 'generative themes' which might form the basis of a new curriculum, more precisely focused on identifying and exploring oppressive myths about women.

We used romance as a theme, but the research has implications for the study of other kinds of literature. Radway's (1984; 1986) argument that romantic fiction may be popular because it trades on coded expressions of female discontent is born out to some extent by the kinds of discussions (about power, body-image, gender and domesticity, for example), stimulated during this case-study, by reading these texts. However, Radway's is an adaptation of Cawelti's (1976) more general thesis. His argument is that popular genre fiction is repeatedly consumed because it satisifies something which the reader lacks in reality and which the reading process satisifies only temporarily. This suggests that other genres, if exposed to the same classroom processes as the romantic texts, would lead their readers to explore the dissatisfactions leading to that repeated consumption.

Clearly the content of the texts studied was significant. The texts needed to tackle issues which could promote a reflexive form of engagement - one which enabled students to make connections between the texts and their lives. However, the research identified that the methods used were also crucial. Participants approached the texts and the themes they found embedded therein through dialogue. This group process was critical. They compared texts with their own lives and when discussing these comparisons with other students found that their personal experiences were not merely personal - they had a social and political dimension. This often led them to challenge commonly held 'common sense' beliefs about women and their place in the world. However, the women were all different. They had identities shaped by personal histories, class, race and ability as well as by gender. Therefore they also encountered differences in their understandings of the themes they explored which led to a sometimes painful broadening of their 'meaning perspectives' (Mezirow, 1990, pp.2). This led some women to acknowledge a broader understanding of the difficulties and challenges facing women in general and consequently to greater tolerance of those operating outside social norms.

Identifying Discourses.

Thinking about specific themes, although important, was not the only cause of changes in students' perceptions. It became apparent that significant shifts in thinking resulted from the process of considering the nature of romantic discourses in more general terms. These insights developed from thinking about the structural properties of texts - narrative and characterisation. Romantic discourses are particularly pervasive; they offer frameworks which construct many aspects of our personal and family lives. At the same time they are naturalised and embedded, so much a part of our everyday perceptions that we often fail to recognise them (Margolies, 1982/3; Belsey, 1994). Consequently, becoming aware of them, not only in obvious cultural products, like films, books and television, but in the stories they told about themselves and heard about others, was revelatory for some students. However, an awareness that our personal experiences, our private stories, are socially constructed and told within the discourses which dominate our societies could result from studying other kinds of

literature. It is also an understanding which could be transferred from the specific context of romantic fiction, leading to a different understanding of reality and experience. That is, realising that personal experiences were constructed according to one set of discourses (romance) might sensitise individuals to the operations of other discourses.

Practical Criticism.

The research suggested that textual, as well as thematic, approaches to literature make an important contribution to the development of a critically questioning approach to communication. The data suggest that critical analysis, with its emphasis on close textual observation, encourages transferable skills and transferable awareness. Students become aware of the political nature of communication by attending to the process of critical analysis - considering point of view, semiotics and the persuasive properties of characterisation and narrative structures. In the case of romantic fiction, close readings of texts inevitably raised questions about the value systems they appeared to privilege and enhanced students' awareness of the subtle linguistic processes which help to construct socially determined realities (such as male dominance or monogamy) as 'natural.' They went on to apply this new, critical way of 'reading' outside the classroom, to a much wider range of social texts. Various moves have been made to teach critical thinking as a subject in its own right (Robinson, 1989). Similarly, some strands of literary and cultural studies in adult education emphasised the importance of deconstructing commercial and popular culture (such as advertisements or popular newspapers) to alert students to their persuasive textual practices (see Steele, 1997, for an account of different approaches to Cultural Studies/English in the history of adult education). The case-study suggested that this kind of critical thinking can develop through engagement with one sort of text to become a more general habit of thought. Furthermore, it implies that it is not necessary to focus exclusively on mass/commercial products to do this; these habits of perception developed as much from the study of *Jane Eyre* or *The Magic Toyshop* as they did from the study of Mills and Boon romances.

Some of our work emphasised the role of intertextuality. Theories of intertextuality insist that texts are not self-contained systems. They incorporate other texts - those the writer has read and those the reader has read. Theories of intertextuality may concern themselves primarily with a text's relationship with other written texts; they may also define texts more widely, to include, for example, other products, historical events, institutions and social occasions (Worton and Still, 1990).

This work challenged students' beliefs about how meaning is made and had implications beyond their understanding of the particular texts studied. It encouraged students to think about knowledge and meaning in more general terms. Students' engagement with figurative language, especially metaphor, and with readings which used associative, psychoanalytical or other, non-literal ways of reading, reinforced this by indicating that texts could be read in many different, sometimes contradictory, ways.

Although such approaches do not necessarily have social and political issues as their focus, they lead to changes in beliefs about knowledge which can have profoundly political implications. Freire (1972) insisted that his work was epistemologically based; that learners, in order to be liberated, need to act on the world and name it for themselves, rather than receiving it ready packaged and interpreted. The work we did on intertextuality encouraged students to see that there was no unmediated reality awaiting them - that they always actively interpreted information as cultural beings. It complemented the more conventional critical analysis, discussed above, which focused on transmission rather than reception. The combination of the two meant that many came to see that both parts of the reading equation were socially and politically constructed. They were faced with their growing awareness that writers work from a particular perspective and that their texts may embody the values and beliefs of a particular era, group or hegemony. They saw that linguistic and structural practices could construct preferred readings which appear to naturalise those values and beliefs. At the same time, they recognised that they also had a role to play in making those readings; that any given word, phrase, image or narrative configuration could be read differently by individuals according to their pre-existing values and beliefs.

Of course, students learned this in uncertain ways. They were not usually able to put all those ideas together and make a coherent argument about the reading process. The detailed, qualitative nature of the case-study, and the fact that it followed students throughout the module as opposed to sampling responses at set points, made it particularly sensitive to small-scale shifts in epistemological perspectives. It demonstrated not only the general direction of a student's development, but that personal and emotional factors affected the process.

Conclusion.

This research helped me to understand how my students changed through participating in a Cultural Studies module. They asserted that they had indeed become far more critically questioning about the information they encountered and the images they viewed; that they were more politically conscious, particularly with respect to gender politics and that they felt empowered to challenge some of the dominant and taken for granted discourses which surrounded them. This arose as a result of working with popular texts which prompted critical reflection on their situations as women and as a result of participating in a wide range of literary critical activities.

Literature has often been derided as a 'women's subject'. It is apposite, therefore, that this research showed that its examination can enhance women's understanding of their social situations. Literature, far from being a recreational, liberal and individualistic subject, always has the potential to politicise those who study it.

The study of literature has an important role to play in adult education. It can be a powerful vehicle for promoting critical reflection. This research demonstrates that a critical engagement with texts can contribute to a politicisation process. The nature of that politicisation will always depend on the political situation of those doing the studying, on the nature of the texts chosen and on the processes used to manage the studying. Thematic approaches to literature directly engender debate about political issues - in this case about gender stereotyping, oppressive body images, contradictory attitudes to women in work. More technical approaches politicise by confronting students with the persuasive, connotative and situated properties of language. They find it more difficult to accept that they are offered unvarnished truth, but ask 'whose truth?'

This research enhanced my understanding of the potential of my subject. I am now more conscious of the way that different approaches to teaching literature are likely to promote different kinds of changes in students' perceptions. It has influenced the shape of subsequent curriculum developments for other groups of students by enabling me to tailor such developments more precisely to the kinds of learning outcomes the development teams intended students to achieve. There are many contexts in which I operate in which this is necessary to ensure a place for Literature in the curriculum.

Nevertheless, I continue to believe that Literary study should be eclectic if students are to gain maximum benefit. In the end, it was the combination of thematic, structural and technical approaches to literature which led many of the students in this case-study to consider themselves changed people.

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Adult learning in civil society - exploring roles for adult educators?

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There is emerging evidence of a contemporary growth of adult learning within civil society, 'that public space which is independent of the state' (Krygier 1996:14). This learning involves a spectrum of groups, ranging through adult education classes, autonomous study circles, voluntary organisations, community groups and a variety of social movements. This new emphasis on learning within civil society appears to arise out of two parallel trends within society today. On the one hand, there is a proliferation and diversity of forms and sites of learning developing out of a new focus on Lifelong Learning and a flexible learning as a way of coming to terms with the growing complexities and uncertainties of the post-modern or late modern era. On the other, it reflects a renewed interest in learning in civil society on the part of educators, as they try to gain some autonomous space away from the prescriptions and restrictions of the directive funding mechanisms and bureaucratization of formal education institutions and challenge the dominant discourse of Lifelong Learning firmly rooted in human capital ideology and focused on the 'economic individual'.

Adult educators across the globe, especially those with a commitment to a social purpose, have a particular interest in developments within civil society. Indeed, social purpose adult education has a long and distinguished history of involvement in civil society from the work of the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Workers' Education Association in the UK, to that of the Highlander Centre and the Antigonish Movement in North America, to Paulo Freire and his disciples in South America and Africa, to the Study Circles of Sweden and Denmark.

However, the world is becoming increasingly complex and unpredictable, as demonstrated for example in a rapidly-changing and fragmenting global labour market, the pervasiveness of marketisation and consumerism, the new questions being raised about the role and funding of the welfare state, the exponential growth of the information society, a wider acknowledgement and assertion of cultural diversity and pluralism and a growing recognition of a global learning divide between 'haves' and 'have nots'. All these developments compound into a growing acknowledgement of the existence of a 'Risk Society', typified by risk and uncertainty where ' new areas of unpredictability are created quite often by the very attempts to control them.' (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994:vii)

While the Risk Society has clear implications for the role of the state, it also impacts on civil society and within it the whole idea of social purpose adult education. This does not mean that the values of social purpose education, like social justice, greater social and economic equality, the promotion of a critical democracy, are no longer valid, but it perhaps calls into question some of the modernist certainties of social purpose educators as well as exactly how they develop their praxis. In this vein and in this context, Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997:24) identify a lessening of the power of the educator to define what constitutes worthwhile knowledge and serious learning and Michael Welton suggests that as educators we need to move towards a more chastened and modest utopianism (Welton 1997a:28)] The Risk Society raises questions about exactly how educators can best sustain a social purpose and how they can usefully engage with and influence a lot of the learning already taking place within civil society, much of which exists independently of any professionally recognised educator.

This paper will try to explore the contemporary resurgence of interest in the sphere of civil society, then trace the growth of adult learning within it and the range of groups and organisations involved. It will then review critically the possible roles for research and teaching in relation to the different groups involved in adult learning within civil society with a view to bridging the gap between radical rhetoric and often essentially conservative practice.

Civil Society

Along with a renewed interest in civil society comes a need to review exactly what the term means and why it is attractive to different interest groups. Gramsci re-formulated Hegel's original more economistic concept of 'civil society' to identify it as an essentially political, oppositional sphere of operations to what he termed as 'political society' or the state. This was an opposition earlier identified by independent working class groups in the UK and later highlighted in the 'civil society against the state' movement in Eastern Europe. Gramsci saw civil society as comprising '...all of the "so-called private" organisations such as churches, trade unions, political parties and cultural associations which are distinct from the processes of production *and* from the public apparatuses of the state'. (Simon 1985:69) Just as importantly, he identified it as ethical or moral society within which the dominant hegemony can be challenged: 'it is precisely in civil society in which intellectuals operate especially' (Gramsci 1986: 56)

With this in mind, it is easy to see how there can be different meanings of and emphases in civil society between Right and Left, between the former East and former West. For example, those towards the Right are interested in civil society as it reflects a primarily apolitical arena to develop civic virtues like self-sacrifice, duty and service for others, an arena separate from but still understood to be within the overall framework of a free market society (Green 1993:ix). In contrast, the Left, drawing more directly from Gramsci identifies civil society as a sector of public life outside of the directly regulated political and economic spheres where there is sufficient relative autonomy and subversive space to develop counter-hegemonic action. Equally, in post-communist East Central Europe, there is an emphasis on civil society providing a venue for re-discovering individual civil rights and space for the development of an entrepreneurial spirit and culture after the passive dependency engendered by communist state centralism, while in parts of Western Europe and the USA, there is a concern with community and public space as a way of counter-acting an excessively individualistic ideology and an emphasis on the role and potential of quasi-political social movements in helping to change society (Gustavsson et al 1997:522). In engaging with the wide spectrum of adult learning in civil society, in developing a more 'chastened and modest utopianism', in avoiding simply 'preaching to the converted', adult educators will perhaps need at some time to engage with all these different understandings in reviewing their social purpose praxis.

As a first step, it may be useful to identify and briefly explore the range of adult learning which exists in civil society today as evidenced through contemporary literature and empirical research. A broad continuum of adult learning can perhaps be traced ranging from predominantly individualised learning initiatives, for example, the development of hobbies and private interests, through more collective learning, for example, in voluntary and community organisations, to more overtly political learning activities, for example, in and through social movements.

While acknowledging the extent of the learning which takes place on an individual basis within civil society and recognising that adult educators may have a supportive role to play with such individuals within an Learning Society (Johnston and Percy 1997), this paper, because it is concerned with the social purpose dimension of learning, will concentrate on learning amongst groups within civil society. Moving along the continuum, empirical evidence exists regarding learning and action within voluntary organisations. For example, Elsdon has demonstrated the extent of the voluntary sector in the UK and the prevalence of learning that takes place in voluntary organisations. Significantly, his research identifies that over 50% of his respondents report that they have become more politically conscious as a result of their involvement in voluntary organisations and that 25% of have become more politically active as a result of this participation and learning (Elsdon 1997: 23). On a broader international scale, these UK findings are consistent with the experience of Study Circles in Sweden (Larsson 1997), and more recently Australia (AAACE, Morgan) as well as the Equipped for the Future initiative in the USA (Merrifield 1997:323-4). Indeed this last study of the civic participation of 1500 adult learners from adult basic education and literacy programmes in 34 States shows that they wanted to learn in order to have better access to information, give voice to their ideas and opinions and be heard, solve problems and make decisions on their own and keep up with a rapidly-changing world.

At the furthest end of this adult learning continuum is the learning that takes place within social movements. 'Old' social movements, for example trade unions and the churches, are seen to be more

rooted in tradition, more centrally organised with a defined membership and specific aims and have a long history of engagement with adult educators in both formal and informal learning situations (see Fieldhouse 1996). In contrast, 'new' social movements, for example, environmental groups, consumer groups, groups co-alescing around issues of gender, race, sexuality, disability, age, are seen to be more knowledge-based, issue-orientated, to be acting in the defence of the public realm, concerned with the autonomy of the people (Jarvis 1997: 163) but have few connections with adult educators, as an important part of their raison d'etre is to take responsibility for their own learning activities.

Exploring Roles for Adult Educators

Having briefly reviewed the range of adult learning in groups in civil society, it is instructive to note that they all relate to some kind of social purpose and have a specific interest in active civic participation, yet few are actively involved with adult educators. If adult educators are to engage usefully with adult learners in civil society to the learners' advantage and in the interests of fostering social purpose learning and ideas of active citizenship, then how are we to proceed? Suggested responses vary from the liberal, the technical/functional to the more radical. For example, Oglesby (1997:17-22) advocates helping people to understand the causes of change and education for rights and responsibilities; Elsdon (1997: 24) suggests that voluntary organisations need moral support, information, advice and training, while Benn and Fieldhouse (1997: 63-64) build this into a more comprehensive outline curriculum for citizenship involving a critical leadership training which encompasses all the above dimensions but also involves locating local issues in a wider socio-political context, promoting participant 'voice' and helping participants to deal with difference, diversity and, at times, conflict.

These responses all have considerable merit and are clearly set out with supportive and collaborative intent. However, there are also attendant dangers in all such educator-framed responses in that: they can be based too much on normative ideas of need; they manage in practice only to engage with the most accessible and like-minded learning groups; they can serve to colonise and deradicalise independent social learning, in, for example, reducing social purpose to the techniques of organisational management and social commitment to individual progression within an accredited system; they engage with social movements only in a tokenistic and/or rhetorical way.

For this reason, I intend to explore the role of the educator more widely in relation to the whole range of collective adult learning in civil society already identified and review the potential that exists for adult education intervention in the interests of fostering a social purpose and countering the learning divide. As a framework for this exploration, I intend to put into a contemporary context Lovett's four roles for the educator within community education: network agent, resources agent, educational guide and teacher. (Lovett 1975)

Network Agent

A concept much invoked today in relation to learning in civil society is social capital, defined by Putnam (1995:67) as 'the features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit'. Social capital is immediately attractive to social purpose adult educators today as it represents a clear counter focus to the dominant emphasis on human and physical capital considerations. Indeed, a variety of social purpose educators recommend building social capital as a practical way of strengthening civil society, of encouraging civic participation, countering social exclusion and promoting the public good (Merrifield 1997: 321-323, Welton 1997b). Still, recent educator research relating to social capital in the USA and in the UK is far from clear as to whether a focus on social capital has an overall emancipatory or conservative effect (Zacharakis-Jutz and Flora 1997) or what exactly is the relationship between social capital and adult learning activity (Field and Schuller 1998).

Further research may be necessary to determine the ultimate impact of social capital on adult learning. Nevertheless the whole debate about social capital re-asserts the role of the educator as a network agent within civil society. This can build on Lovett's original idea of working in a community through making informal contacts; understanding and investigating problems, needs and interests; identifying those that were educational; and translating these into forms acceptable to those concerned. Certainly, examples

of this type of educator activity exist today, whether in making learning and training connections between relatively small voluntary organisations or in working with community groups as part of a multi-agency team in the context of social and economic regeneration. Indeed, in a recent personal involvement with a red/green social movement in Hamburg, I noted how the networking role of a non-directive community educator was central to helping to make and maintain collaborative links between community groups and other social movements (Johnston 1998) In order to develop a networking role, adult educators perhaps need to be fully aware of its essential non-hierarchical nature. In so doing, they can give credibility to adult learning in civil society without necessarily rushing to enmesh it in a formal accredited structure.

Resources Agent

The role of network agent moves readily into the that of resources agent. Lovett saw this role as trying to recognise, contact and bring into operation the individuals and organisations capable of providing appropriate educational resources to meet the needs of the community. In the contemporary world, two areas of educator intervention immediately seem appropriate as an extension of this. First, within a growing bidding and contract culture, educational institutions and educators themselves have the resources and wherewithal to help facilitate bids for funding, whether through the UK Single Regeneration Budget or wider European and other funding structures. The key problem and task for the social purpose educator is to make this expertise and this infrastructure available to groups within civil society while at the same time helping to limit the imperial gaze and the bureaucratic requirements of the facilitating institution.

Another resource role can be linked to research. One clear way of moving beyond the mere rhetoric of community involvement is to develop collaborative and participatory research with community groups and social movements within civil society. Educators can share institutional research expertise and resources with groups in the community in a way that gives credibility, greater legitimacy and a higher profile to groups of learners without necessarily taking over the research process or over-emphasising its technical/methodological aspects. Instructive examples exist of such research partnerships which have been successful in in-depth engagement with groups in civil society but have also identified problems in making the research process and outcomes fully democratic. (Wildemeersch 1992, Zacharakis-Jutz and Flora 1997). The task for educators here may well be to ensure that collaborative research works to mutual benefit, that there is co-operation without colonisation, exploration without exploitation.

Educational Guide

The role of resources agent links well with that of educational guide. Lovett identified the role of being a guide and adviser, to groups already involved in a learning process, whether geared towards social action or personal growth, and essentially on their terms. In the contemporary context of helping to foster/support a social purpose within civil society, this role can be developed in two main ways. A key area where there is great scope is that of learning-needs analysis. A whole industry of consultants now exist in the area of needs analysis, a term which has acquired great prominence and ascribed technical status within an increasingly consumer-oriented society. Adult educators concerned with a social purpose may well have the reputation and expertise to facilitate this process in a different, more critically reflexive way, on the one hand, avoiding common sense and normative ideas of need and on the other moving beyond an over-reliance on technical/rationality - it is interesting to trace how in the voluntary sector for example the language of management increasingly prevails in the process and outcomes of needs assessment and that of social purpose diminishes. Here the role of the educator may be, not to impose or suggest his/her own ideas of social purpose but to problematise the whole context of needs. S/he can engage with the real anxieties arising from the increasing accountability and technical expertise required within a regulated consumer society while at the same time helping groups explore the dialectical relationship between this and the original aims (and social purposes) of the group.

The adult educator can be an educational guide in another way, in relation to more formally-provided educational offerings. While everyone is aware of the growing complexities of educational systems and the consequent need to provide non-directive advice and guidance in order to help prospective learners find their own route through the complexities of the educational system, there is possibly room for

making this more of a two-way process in simultaneously helping to make connections between learners in formal situations and learning and action opportunities in civil society. The high correlation between educational level and active citizenship has been noted by a number of commentators (see Field 1995). This would appear to suggest that a useful and readily achievable role for a social purpose educator would be to facilitate inter-connections between formal education and community and voluntary groups as a way of enriching civil society and helping to create what Welton calls an 'exuberant public sphere' (Welton 1997b).

Teacher

The last role identified by Lovett in 1975 was that of teacher which owed much to Freire's idea of a teacher/learner working with learner/teachers in a community setting. Within contemporary civil society, there would appear to be a continuing role for a suitably humble educational expert. At one level, subject expertise can be harnessed in the interests of learner groups, for example in the growing debate about the environment in connection with Agenda 21 or in a range of health-related issues, both of which impinge on the lives of individuals and groups within civil society. What is important here is that such expert involvement moves beyond a top-down transmission process and incorporates a more reflexive epistemology which also acknowledges the expertise and knowledge that resides with groups in civil society.

This raises another possible teaching role in civil society, in resourcing and illuminating public debates about contemporary issues. I recently came across an instructive example of this in Australia where the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education in collaboration with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation developed resource materials and Study Circles around the very topical and controversial issue of Aboriginal Reconciliation. What was particularly noteworthy about this initiative was that the very well-researched and high quality materials were very much geared to informing the public in an even-handed way but with a clear view towards the active involvement of the Study Circle participants in civil society. Although individual Study Circles met with varying degrees of success in terms of their development, there is evidence that the initiative as whole impacted to some degree on the consciousness of the nation and that, in at least some cases, it prompted further action by, for example, church groups in the interests of Aboriginal Reconciliation (AAACE 1997, Morgan 1997). With the current growth of distance and open learning, this highlights an area where educators can play a teaching/facilitative role in supporting and resourcing groups within civil society as, for example, in the UK example of the Centre for Citizenship Learning and Action and its aim to "create a dynamic partnership of adult eduction providers, trade unions, community and voluntary organisations collaborating on a programme of democratic reform and renewal" (CCLA 1998). Of course, this teaching in civil society, predominantly on the terms and on the territory of learner groups, can always be complemented at a more modest and institutional level. There are still opportunities to create safe spaces (in classrooms and elsewhere) for learners to practise the civil arts (Merrifield 1997), to look critically and reflexively at their learning and action in civil society and to locate this within a wider critical context.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to trace the range and extent of adult learning that goes on in civil society and re-view the role of the adult educator in relation to this. It has tried, within the context of a contemporary Risk Society to identify some potential roles for adult educators who want to work with and support such learning without colonising it, who want to maintain some kind of social purpose without prescribing exactly what that is. I have argued that there are still useful and supportive roles for adult educators in relation to learning and action within civil society. However, in order to identify and develop these, adult educators, both researchers and teachers, need to avoid the danger of radical rhetoric allied to essentially conservative institutional practice. While we need to maintain a critical focus on social purpose adult learning in the interests of a fairer and more equitable society, we should also be more modest in our immediate aims, more flexible in our partnerships and more reflexive in our praxis.

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Sticking together: teaching, learning and the art of research

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Introduction

In this paper we emphasise the importance for community educators of building bridges between emerging needs, research, teaching and learning. A case study of recent work is used to illustrate the way in which research in vocational education and training offers the potential for practical outcomes which are not necessarily defined by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). We believe that fragmentation must be resisted: the glue securing teaching, learning and research must be preserved.

The project which functions as our case study concerned the education and training needs of youth and community arts practitioners. Situated in the north of England, the research was directed by a partnership comprising Yorkshire and Humberside Arts, West Yorkshire Youth Association, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, youth and community arts practitioners and the University of Huddersfield. This innovative collaboration led to pragmatic outcomes in course development, teaching and learning: a new postgraduate course is planned in direct response to the research, a conference was held to share the findings with practitioners whose input, using a focus group approach, was vital in the writing of the final report. We also envisage the work having a practical impact on future approaches to teaching and learning.

We analyse the glue which holds together the collaborative partnership and answer the question: what is the nature of cross-sectoral partnership and how do all the partners get what they want? We believe this brings us back to the good old fashioned idea that the purpose of educational research is to inspire change, and is not only to add to the sum of human knowledge. Sadly, all too often nowadays there is a tendency for research to serve the demands of the RAE.

The art of research

The central position of Youth and Community Work (YCW) as an aspect of Community Education has been addressed in previous SCUTREA papers (Jarvis and Notley 1996; Jones 1996). Professional accreditation in YCW is one aspect of a degree programme. This means that such courses unite developmental approaches to education with vocational training in single programmes. However, unlike certain other aspects of Adult and Continuing Education, YCW is under-developed in terms of academic research activity. The teaching and learning which is delivered through YCW professional qualification courses within HE institutions tends to be disconnected with the practice in which voluntary and statutory agencies and organisations engage. Indeed, there may be a chasm between the two: HE staff and institutions are portrayed as focussing on theories which have no relevance to day-to-day situations whilst agencies are caricatured as operating at an entirely pragmatic level. To some extent the chasm is bridged by the requirement for students' work placements which ensure structured contact frequently occurs between HE staff and agencies. This fosters understanding and keeps all participants aware of developments taking place. However, there are ways of making links stronger. From the inception of the YCW course at the University of Huddersfield, we have consciously sought to ensure strong connections between what we do and the development of YCW practice on a regional basis through active personal involvement in the management of organisations and creation of policy, the delivery of training and, as we will show in this paper, research.

Our emphasis on ensuring that we are not only in contact with YCW practice but also that we are actively involved in the regional scene at both practical and policy levels is rooted in our shared philosophy and praxis. The importance of linking theory and practice is a key tenet of YCW and is intrinsically linked to the profession's ethos. The National Youth Agency, which endorses the qualification in YCW, identifies the profession's 'underlying principles and values' as including the

recognition and promotion of:

- the principle of equality and a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice
- a commitment to empowerment and participatory democracy
- collaborative working relationships and collective action (Agency 1997: 7)

These points correspond with postmodern models of empirical research posited by writers such as Lather (Lather P. 1991) and indicate the way in which the clearly articulated value base of our profession presents an exciting context for research. Our ontological starting-point is largely analogous to that identified by Usher et al and assumes:

> the existence of a world characterised by socio-economic and cultural inequalities, where researchers have a part to play, indeed they have an obligation to endeavour to emancipate oppressed groups, those who suffer from the greatest inequality and a lack of social justice (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997:191).

This, Usher et al add, requires an epistemological commitment to 'the generation of knowledge in the service of emancipation'. Knowledge is measured in terms of its 'usefulness or efficacy in enabling the empowerment of oppressed groups' (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997: 191). Our teaching includes introducing students to approaches to analysing oppressions in addition to theories and practical methods of empowerment: really practical knowledge. It also emphasises the role of groups; of sticking together.

With its close links to practical knowledge, research not only presents us, as HE staff, with the opportunity to be partners in, and agents of, change but also informs our approach to teaching and learning. Sharing a political commitment and vision, we make use of our skills, knowledge and resources not only to make a 'practical' contribution but also to influence developments in our professional field. Voluntary and statutory organisations value an academic approach to research but also require findings to have a practical application. This results in the relevance of identifying, defining, analysing and emphasising 'transferable lessons': problem solving not problem posing. Working together with the key stakeholders (the organisations, their staff and members/users), the research process can be refocused and developed. All involved in the research have ownership of the process.

The importance of ensuring that new barriers are not created by the way in which research data are written up should not be taken to mean that there is no place for theoretical structures and approaches. Indeed, it is the possibility of bringing such a theoretical grounding to the research process which has led organisations to seek the involvement of HE. The potential of moving beyond the purely evaluative format, where outcomes are measured against stated aims and objectives, is seen as a positive addition. The research undertaken by HE partners is not to be confused with commissioned evaluative reports undertaken and delivered by externally commissioned bodies which may / may not have lasting results on the agency's approach and which may be described as 'reviews'. The skills and knowledge brought by HE staff include theoretical approaches and frameworks together with the scope to foster the evolution of innovative methodologies. Frameworks with academic credibility remain significant because of the opportunity they present for making sense of data through indicating connections, implications, patterns; for identifying what *is* transferable. However, resultant material can be written up accessibly, ensuring that all involved feel a sense of ownership.

The RAE has served to emphasise one particular approach to the writing up of research and has thereby institutionalised a hierarchy in research itself. Although researchers find ways to operate in directions they consider appropriate, the widespread perception that playing obscure academic games through refereed papers appears to be of greater value than the generation of more widely read writings in practitioners' journals and magazines or of recording research in accessible terms. Where researchers are committed to emancipatory techniques, there is a contradiction when data are recorded in language which creates or sustains barriers. Additionally, there is a danger of encouraging the achievement of RAE scores whilst undermining research with an emancipatory goal.

Although Martin and Shaw showed how HE institutions' desire to 'climb the rungs of the RAE ladder' can generate internally funded opportunities to engage in 'subversive' projects (Martin and Shaw 1997). The pressure to 'translate' accessibly written research into wilfully obscure articles, designed for publication in refereed journals, remains.

Addressing the question of how research can have a practical impact, Hart identifies the 'pressure on researchers, through the RAE, to generate research funds and publications' and warns that there is a danger that 'unscrupulous (or simply naive) academics' may give disproportionate weight to their findings. In addition, where external funding bodies are involved in funding research, to what extent are they involved in determining the nature and direction of the research undertaken? The research on which Hart focuses was commissioned by District and Regional Health Authorities 'who ... have either not undertaken this kind of work themselves and are unaware of what is possible, or accept the advice of those intimately involved with research, which in itself may be flawed or, at the very least, limited in the range of research expertise' (Hart 1997:121). The implications of such research may be a misplaced reliance on published findings which over-emphasise certain aspects, introducing bias or unreliability. More encouragingly, however, McIntyre observes,

> Commissioned research is often seen as dirty work subordinated to policy imperatives, and restricted in scope by project timelines and policy agendas. Sometimes it is, but also it is true that policy objectives may often require both depth and complexity and invite and tolerate the contradiction of current policy positions. (McIntyre 1997)

We are interested in particular in the role of research in creating or influencing policy. The identification of 'transferable' aspects, for example, may herald the birth of work intended to put the 'transfer' into practice. The models of partnership and the approaches to research which we have adopted are designed to avoid the range of pitfalls outlined above by establishing clear boundaries before the beginning of the work and by constantly revisiting and, where necessary, redefining and refining ground rules. The research findings have included findings which have challenged the commissioning agency.

Teaching and learning ourselves

Engaging in practical research ensures that we continue to develop our own reflective practice, moving through the processes of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (see Kolb D.A. 1984) which we are aiming to nurture in the students. Thus practical research provides the opportunity for us to present models of good, and developing / evolving practice for our students. Indeed, the reflection engendered by the writing of this paper has resulted in a decision to develop the process of sharing our research with the students.

YCW students may be full-time undergraduates or part-time, in-service students. In order to deliver courses which stimulate, challenge and have clearly identifiable relevance for the latter group, who may be very experienced and somewhat cynical about the fact that, after spending many years engaged in practical work they need to gain professional accreditation in order to 'move on', it is vital for staff to keep abreast of current practice and developments. Participation in research is one of the ways in which this can be assured.

The research into art

Several examples of this approach to research have taken place during the last eighteen months. One example involved both the authors of this paper in researching 'unintended outcomes' at Manchester's Trinity House family centre together with the staff, users and representatives of local authority departments. The research was commissioned by Save the Children, who funded much of the centre and its work. The report was written as accessibly as possible. However, we are intending to undermine one of the values underpinning the work by subjecting our methodology to academic analysis and writing it up with refereed publications in mind. This would result in writing which

would be impenetrable to the people with whom we conducted the research. Although it could be argued that different voices and languages are appropriate for different audiences, we would regret creating work around which we have erected barriers through which only those with privileged educational experience may pass, when the original research was understood by all who took part.

The example on which we focus in this paper, concerns the recently completed research into youth and community arts work in the Yorkshire / Humberside region. The research brought together Yorkshire and vHumberside Arts, West Yorkshire Youth Association, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, youth and community arts practitioners and the University of Huddersfield. Youth arts work, which may be defined as the use of a range of practical arts techniques in youth and community environments, is a natural vehicle for informal education. The emphasis is on the use of arts as the medium for developmental work rather than on 'art for art's sake'. An enormous diversity of opportunities can be opened up to young people. At its best, youth and community arts work is a very practical way forward to achieving the goals of youth empowerment; as a vehicle it enables young people to articulate their view of their own lives and the world around them in ways which communicate directly with the adult world. As well as inspiring young people's group and personal development, the use of arts has an impact and influence on the wider adult world, achieving progress through the process, the medium and the message. In addition, youth arts work has the potential to reflect the diverse cultures which are vital to young people from a wide variety of backgrounds. However, there is no clear route into such potentially challenging and rewarding work. YCW training includes a generic range of YCW skills but without emphasising specialised arts skills. HE courses in arts skills tend to concentrate on personal achievement in the chosen skill area: the outcome or product is emphasised.

Given this context, the original focus of the research was the existing training backgrounds of youth and community arts practitioners and their future training needs. The partnership's members were aware that many practitioners appeared to be frustrated that they were not able to access posts requiring YCW professional qualifications. However, whilst such a need could have been met at face value, we were interested in defining precise training needs, in gaining a vision of the current opportunities and in working with current practitioners to create and design educational programmes which met their needs, whether to be delivered by the University of Huddersfield or by other organisations.

Sticking together the partnership

The partnership brought together individuals and organisations whose interest in the field pre-existed the research. As with many such collaborative pieces, previously existing networks were not insignificant in creating the 'glue'. But what elements ensured that the 'glue' was truly 'super'? Stokely Carmichael, analysing alliances between poor white Americans and African American people, asserted that all alliances are based on the principle of mutual exploitation(Carmichael and Hamilton 1969): a strong way of saying that partnerships are a two-way process where each party needs to be clear and explicit about what they want and expect to get out of the arrangement. The dynamic interface between agencies impels thinking and action towards new horizons; the desire is to bring about change and achieve objectives through collaboration which cannot be achieved by a single agency. The participants in the Youth and Community Arts research all brought a commitment to bringing about change. This was one aspect of the vision and values which were articulated and shared in order to ensure a further ingredient in the glue: trust in other partners founded on belief in the integrity of all involved. For example, other partners trusted the integrity of our approach to using the work as the case study in this paper, or as a source of material for future articles. They trusted us not to use the chance of accessing their networks as an opportunity to market our courses.

The University of Huddersfield brought to the partnership the credibility of its name and reputation on a stage beyond the regional; the resources available to staff, the academic and research skills and knowledge which would ensure that the research was undertaken with an appropriate approach. The regional voluntary organisation brought credibility with local and regional organisations, contacts with grassroots agencies and vital specific, contextualised knowledge. The funding bodies brought

regional and national perspectives, credibility on a regional and national basis with practitioners and agencies and knowledge of a range of initiatives. An understanding, appreciation and valuing of difference formed a vital foundation of respect which contributed to the adhesive qualities of the glue.

It is significant that the partnership's group dynamics had the features which binary gender analysis would define as 'female'. Although all participants possessed power, whether through knowledge or through being in control of the funding, these aspects were not used as a source of privilege but rather of celebration.

Sticking together the future

The project has led to important tangible outcomes and directions for the future. The dialogue which has taken place across professional and institutional boundaries has created a springboard for creative thinking and working together in future. The significance of securing the interest and commitment of the regional arts organisation, local authority youth and community services, practitioners and HE to this often marginalised area of work should not be underestimated. The outcomes included a number of specific proposals, underpinned by systems of rigorous evaluation. First, the University plans to design and launch a new postgraduate route to professional YCW qualification in February 1999. The course and its curriculum are being designed to meet the express needs of youth and community arts practitioners which were drawn out through consultation processes. This involves developing our existing methods for linking theory and practice to ensure their relevance for practitioners working in and through arts. Advisory and management systems will ensure the continued relevance of the course. Secondly, the soon-to-be established regional Youth Work Unit will work alongside the regional arts organisation to develop a regional strategy to disseminate information about short term courses and models of good practice. Thirdly, the regional arts organisation has been asked to consider ways of providing financial support for arts practitioners who wish to embark upon training. Finally, local authorities within the region have been asked to consider including arts methods in their own, local, initial part-time YCW training programmes. These outcomes demonstrate the way in which research conducted in partnership with other organisations can have outcomes which influence future practice and policy developments.

Sticking together: teaching, learning and the art of research

Either of us could have written this paper on our own. It would have been different but nonetheless it would have given the individual the 'full points' for the RAE. However, working together provides, in microcosm, similar advantages to working in partnership with other organisations. The opportunity to engage in dialogue around professional dilemmas and tensions has outcomes which extend beyond the single piece of work. In this case, we have formulated ideas for approaches to working with students during the process of writing the paper. The Arts research led to the creation of new, stimulating networks of practitioners, from drama and dance workers to practitioners from a range of visual arts backgrounds including mask making and video.

The Arts research project presents a case study of how, in the field of teaching and learning in a professional context, it is possible for HE institutions to bridge the chasm which lies between the realities of everyday practice in the field and the popular perception of the approaches and interests characterising HE. For individuals working in 'new' universities, the 'teaching' often seems quite separate from the 'research': the latter takes place when the students are on vacation and opportunities to develop a professional praxis which brings the two together in a holistic approach are rare. However, just as young people learn and develop through arts based processes, media and messages, so HE staff can develop their practice through sticking together their teaching, learning and research.

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The experience of young adults in transition: making connections

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In this paper my aim is to foreground elements of intersubjectivity and difference in respect of young adults in transition. My intention is to *pre-view* a small part of my research in progress; on one hand to make transparent the connections between teaching and learning and on the other to show how research may contribute to the development of new knowing and understanding.

The Research

The research utilises qualitative data and has made use of the 'grounded theory' methodology first described by Glaser and Strauss (1968). The key to understanding grounded theory is to begin with an open mind and allow the problems and issues to emerge with the flow of the research: to allow the data, as far as humanly possible, to define the development and conduct of the processes of research and to use emergent categories and concepts as provisional markers in an unfolding story. Its commitment is to *verstehen* (Weber 1964). As such it is both cyclical and reflexive and as an ongoing principle relies on small-scale hypothesis testing as a means of generating new questions.

The interviews were informal and deliberately 'casual'. Yet they were marked by 'buoys', which provided me with a structure upon which to frame questions. I would typically spend many hours listening to the tapes and reading through the transcripts so that I could get to know as much as possible about the actors as individuals - to allow me to educe the understanding and deeper structures of meaning which lie beneath action.

All the individuals, during the course of the research, changed in some way. Often these changes were overtly physical, however there were also other perceptual changes in their consciousness. My aim has been to map these changes and to discover through the emergent categories and concepts areas of intersubjectivity and difference between the actors in the flow of their lives. For example, in the initial interviews I was concerned with their biographical details, with their interests and with their attitudes to school and to learning itself. But I was also interested in their hopes, aspirations and expectations. In subsequent interviews I would check back on these to highlight any emergent changes in their unfolding careers (Hughes, 1937). Sometimes the changes were profound, however in other cases the changes were more incremental and evolutionary.

Transition

For young adults in late modernity transitions are more protracted, less certain and more ambiguous than they appeared in the 1950s and 1960s. They are longer journeys in which individuals have more potential and opportunity to *act upon* (Bloomer, 1997) their circumstances. Changing perceptions and changing social structures have contrived to create new and distinct contingencies, that is new risks and uncertainties, which are both local and global in their origins (Giddens, 1991; Beck 1992). The effects on individual young adults has been ambiguous. Although on the one hand young adults seem to have more choices, they are choices which have been socially prescribed and which, despite the expansion of educational opportunity, remain delimited by issues and identities such as class, race and gender. The rhetoric of choice is problematic.

Dispositions

One of the concepts intrinsic to the interview data is that concerned with the orientation of young adults towards action. In order to unravel these I have 'borrowed' from the contemporary literature a term which, as a dynamic equilibrium, emphasises the relations and positions existing between identities in a particular moment.

Dispositions (for example, Bourdieu 1976; 1990; Hodkinson 1996), provide a means through which actors make sense of the world and as such are embodied within understanding. This understanding applies longitudinally to their individual progression and the progression of others, and laterally in terms of the accounts of others at a similar moment in time. The notion that individuals are in some way disposed to particular circumstances or actions does not in any way imply that their dispositions are fixed. Young people may be disposed, within an evolving matrix, to certain actions and to the creation of meanings. These are portrayed as propensities or inclinations within consciousness which mediate between schemata and also between schemata and action; they include relations within specific domains or identities, and relations between the different aspects of their lives. In this way schemata are both social and individual: social in their relations between domains, and individual in their qualities portrayed within biography.

Whilst concerned with the perceptions and actions of individuals to knowledge and learning, dispositions are also reflexively integrated into a broader and no less complex narrative in which 'personal identity, life-history, social and cultural contexts, actions and learning are inter-related' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1997, 46). Nixon *et al* (1996), in emphasising this point that learning lies at the root of identity and agency, suggest succinctly:

> Learning is becoming. It is an unfolding through which we learn not only what makes us unique - what individuates us - but how we can make that distinctive agency work in the world (p.49)

Individual actors may 'act upon' circumstances and opportunities and create their own careers, but in so doing they may invoke unintended outcomes which reflexively reshape meanings within the future-past as biography. This flow of action and the decision making associated and connected with it implicitly forms part of the flow of learning (for example, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Nixon *et al.* 1996; Brown *et al.* 1989). It is not an abstracted cognitive process but an evolving set of social relations. Action and learning reside side-by-side within understanding and knowledge; they are in fluxion to the end of life, but in life are interwoven 'as an evolving form of membership'(Lave and Wenger, 1991), with identity.

The practices and processes of education, in the strong sense described above, are dialectically related to one another. Whilst at their best they may empower individuals and provide them with the wherewithal to assume a greater degree of control over lifestyle options and choices, they may also, in a different moment, be no more than a peripheral consideration. For the present purpose I have chosen to make use of two exemplar cases to illustrate the connectedness of learning to structures and contexts which continually shift. I begin with a picture of Tom whose dispositions and understanding of the world around him were transformed following his move - on an Island scholarship in Year 12, to College in Wales.

Tom

Certainly in his first term at his new school, a transitional point in his life, Tom was disposed to the possibility of change. Abetted by more relaxed relations with both peers and teachers and at ease with himself he was, without fuss, able to reconfigure his existing schemata. On the back of his existing **pre**dispositions he consolidated his commitment to broader social values. This he achieved without risk by making use of his school as a safe environment to test out and rearrange new experiences and understandings (Beck, 1992). Tom began his second interview by immediately affirming the impact of his new environment. More specifically he acknowledged the broader influence of the International Baccalaureate as both a structure and a process on his understanding.

> *We do six subjects, three at higher level and three at a lower level. You've got to choose six different subjects but you have to choose a subject from a certain group in each category. So you have to choose a science and a mathematical subject, a humanity etc. My three highers at the moment - they're different to what I chose initially - are European History, English*

Literature and Economics. Initially I chose Biology but changed to History. My three subsidiaries at the moment are Maths Biology and French.

Despite all the changes confronting him his main subject choices remained essentially the same as they would have been had he continued with his 'A' level studies. In this way they reflected his more enduring **pre**dispositions. Tom went on to describe in detail the structure and composition of the curriculum and of his learning; but as is illustrated below he interspersed this with insights in respect of his understanding, to clarify more fully the texture and composition within his prevailing horizons.

The curriculum's a lot more interesting than what I was going to do here (in Jersey), with the three 'A' levels. There's no uniform. All the teachers are on first name basis so the atmosphere is really relaxed. It's brilliant, I really enjoy it but I think it only works because the students aren't going to abuse the system.

Perhaps it was the speed and fluidity of his delivery but it is difficult to capture in the text alone his fullness and anticipation as he used the opportunity afforded in the interview to reflect upon, probe and unravel his emergent understanding. I asked Tom to describe his three main subjects and to explain the approaches used by the teachers. He began by talking about English and his more eclectic studies of World Literature.

We're doing various texts. We've done stuff by Eugene Eunesco which is about the Theatre of the Absurd. We've got drama incorporated into our lessons. We have to study twenty-five books and five of these are World literature and twenty are English literature. [...]We have very in depth discussions. ...It's good like when religion is incorporated into the text. We have so many religions and races represented in the class that you can get really good discussion.

This is education in its purest form; not only is there evidence of Tom being challenged at an appropriate intellectual level but he was so doing by drawing on the experiences, the knowledge and the resources of those around him. Tom was particularly taken by the teacher in Economics. It was his teacher's personal stories and his 'alternative' rather than strictly bourgeois view of Economics which made the subject so interesting. He conveyed the excitement and drama of the world outside and in this way brought the subject to life in the classroom. So, rather than a 'dry' science concerned with aggregates and financial markets the subject was *re*-presented as a human science concerned with the potential and possibilities for ordinary people in the day-to-day transaction of their lives.

Teachers are important especially at the age around GCSEs and just before. After GCSEs I think you're more or less following a direction. I think just before GCSEs teachers can influence which way you go. I find some teachers much more influential and better than others but you have to reach a certain age and maturity to realise. You may have to do a lot of work after the lesson.

It would be naïve to propose that Tom's learning was confined to the classroom. In many respects it was his actions outside the classroom which contributed to his re-configured dispositions in the different domains of his life.

If I was at home I'd be a lot more ignorant about what was going on in the world. I read the Guardian I never did before. I was quite ignorant about politics. When I look back now I'm aware of what a bubble we live in here. It's not what you know but who you know.

[...]I've only been here one term. I've had all these new views and people. I think it's brilliant, more places should incorporate the I.B. We have to choose a service to the community. We've got an inshore lifeboat station and a coast-guard station. We've had nine call-outs since I've been here. They say like the RAF section at (my previous school) was character building but it's nothing like pulling bodies out of the sea.

There is a recognition in the narrative of the dialectical relations and tensions between Tom's objective and perceptual concerns. Having spent his formative years in socially restricted networks, for example in school and in leisure, he was suddenly catapulted into uncertainty; that is into an environment in which his existing frame of reference and understanding was challenged. Within the space of a few months his position transformed to one which was much more fluid, where there was the promotion and realignment of his general development and education over his desire for the accompaniments and accessories associated with life in the late modern age. So a straightforward transition into post-compulsory education was transformed into an event which re-shaped his understanding.

Michelle

In Year 11 there were a number of similarities in the stories of Michelle and Tom particularly in relation to their perceived aspirations in respect of their vocational careers and lifestyles (Giddens, 1991). But their dispositions were positioned within different fields (Bourdieu, 1976; 1990) or contexts. School for Tom, in the sixth form, became a pre-eminent influence in his life. On the other hand, although Michelle continued with her education and training (GNVQ Advanced Business), at the FE college, it was regarded by her as abstracted and separate from her day-to-day life and interests. For her, college provided experiences distinct from the *real* world outside.

After the usual introductions I initiated my third interview with Michelle by showing her parts of the narrative which relayed directly words used by her in her previous interviews. She read these with some interest.

> *I've definitely changed. I don't remember saying any of this. I can't believe it came from me. I didn't realise I had such a strong character. I've grown up. I've calmed down. I've got more control over myself. I think I was getting there last time and now I have.*

Michelle did not wait for me to ask her about her experiences but moved on immediately and unsolicited to describe her experiences. I took this partly as an expression of her desire to control but also as a cathartic exercise in which she was expunging her feelings over the break-up of her parents marriage.

> *It was very sudden but not shocking. I was in the car with my mother when she told me Dad had left the house. It was late I'd just been out in town with friends.*

She continued by describing how the experience brought her closer to her mother:

> *I cooked us a huge fry-up, an early morning breakfast. I've never seen her eat fried food. Our relationship changed, we became best friends. She became a different person.*

Needing a holiday, it seems that her mother was happy for Michelle to invite her boyfriend to move temporarily into the house while she was away:

> *(John) moved into the house and things were fine at first but when my mother returned she was back to the old person. We argued, my boyfriend couldn't put up with it - me being so upset and crying to him and him in the middle. He went back home.*

With the situation deteriorating at home, and following some negotiation with her parents individually, she moved into a flat shared with her boyfriend. Perceptually this involved the construction of new identities and roles embedded in the pressing and immediate concerns of her day-to-day life. Rents are not cheap and her boyfriend's job did not generate a sufficient income for two people. It was however now the summer vacation and Michelle managed to find herself a day job to complement her regular baby-sitting work.

I worked in the summer and earned quite a bit of money. And I've got a baby-sitting job where I can earn £20 a night. I get there at seven at night and go home at two in the morning. I get to do what I want. When I baby-sit I study - which is two nights a week.

Michelle talked with relish about how, in her summer job, she was valued by her employer:

I was employed as a computer inputter and by my third week there I was not only a computer inputter but a secretary for two guys that I was working for. ...I learned so much and I realised that I did want to go into finance for my degree at university. It made me put it into practice and I really did enjoy it.

[...] The work experience here was not the same. I loved it but talking to the lawyer - the younger lawyer, made me realise that I did not want to be a lawyer.

I was mildly surprised by her insistence that she was going to pursue her educational career. This created a dilemma, between her current desires and achievements and her aspirations in the future for security, self-sufficiency and ultimately control. Moreover, she wanted to continue with a university education as proof of her capabilities but also to achieve what she envisioned as greater control of her own destiny:

I'm not taking a year out. Happiness is what I've been trying to get at. My boyfriend makes me very happy. We've agreed we're not going to split up. I can get a degree - a piece of paper which says: "This girl's not stupid."

[...]I want to go to Bristol (University of the West of England), because it sounds like a nice place. My Dad's over the moon.

She was seeking to reconcile a dilemma; on one side there was the independence sought by her; yet this had arrived almost too quickly and she craved time to join with her contemporaries and perhaps 'grow' more slowly into her adult status:

I have a different perspective to life than they do. Saturday to me is doing things in the day that need to be done leaving the evening free so that I can go out. They'd rather go shopping on Saturday which is something I don't like doing. I don't have the money.

[...]I've grown up like people do. I'm not stuck in the world of teenage life. I mean, I don't deny that I'm a teenager and I still do things that teenagers do but I look at it more sensibly now. I'm someone who is pretty close to adulthood. I've done enough growing up. Sometimes I think I feel too mature for my own good. I forget that I'm only seventeen and that my boyfriend's twenty.

In order to continue with her education Michelle was aware that she needed to improve her course-work grades. She sought to partially absolve herself by apportioning blame to looseness in the structure of the course:

Now in the second year we have much more freedom and longer breaks. But I don't think it's as good now. We've got too much time and I've got behind. We have to be here at nine o'clock in the morning. Like on Wednesday I have a lesson till ten-thirty then I go home till two. The last thing I want to do is homework.

This is not a description by a young person enjoying her experience in college. It is an account which would be disclaimed by Tom, of a person whose college work is separate from her interests outside the classroom. It is a depiction in which training and education are for the moment disengaged from deeper and more profound interests but which, at the same time, are perhaps standing in reserve, waiting for another moment. Of course it will be interesting to see what happens to Tom and to Michelle but these are imponderable questions which have been assayed in the present but can only be answered in the future.

The future

Though research can never be more than a representation of reality in a particular moment, it should not preclude it from representing that reality as a flow of action rather than as something which is fixed and unchanging. For it is the linkages, connections and *dis*connections within disparate human experience and at the heart of understanding, which makes research a worthwhile endeavour. Though my overriding aspiration, in the context of my research, has been to unravel and deconstruct the experiences of young adults in transition, I have found that in order to make sense of these experiences I have been forced to confront contradictions in their day-to-day lives. My aim has been to foreground these relations. It has been to demonstrate that experience, conceived as a set of dialectical rather than separately constructed relations, may in another moment re-configure understanding of the past, the present and the future.

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Degrees of learning: researching adult students' and lecturers' perspectives on teaching and learning in university

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Introduction

Adults entering university have to learn and adapt to a new social situation. Mature students generally begin university life with high expectations of what learning, and more specifically, a university degree can do to their lives in relation to personal development and employment. A university education and the role of being a student are experiences that also need to be demystified. Adult students have to present the self in lectures and seminars and quickly learn the student role:

> We can, and I think must, look upon human life as chiefly a vast interpretive process in which people singly and collectively, guide themselves by defining objects, events and situations which they encounter (Blumer, 1956: 686).

In developing the learner role a workable definition of the situation is created whereby new norms, values and behaviours are internalised while at the same time acting upon a new social world to shape an adult student career:

> Actions do not thus simply follow from the norms and the role expectations associated with a particular group, but upon the interpretations made by actors of their experience within their world (Urry, 1970: 360).

Adult students do not act in a vacuum. Lecturers and, to a lesser extent, younger students impact upon their learning. While how adults learn is well documented (Knowles, 1984, Brookfield, 1986) little is known about the interaction of adult students and lecturers in the learning situation of a university. This paper, using a case study of the University of Warwick, examines the learning and teaching experiences of adult students and lecturers. Part-time, full-time and 2+2 students were included in this study (2+2 degrees are aimed specifically at adults). Lecturers in the following departments were interviewed: Biological Sciences, Arts Education, Law and Sociology.

In making sense of the adult students' learning and lecturers ' teaching experiences and interaction in the 'classroom' I draw upon the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism; in particular the work of Goffman and Becker. Using this perspective provides an analytical framework in which the dynamics of structure and agency can be discussed and examined.

The Learning Experience: Lectures, Seminars and Assessment

Participants arrived at Warwick with preconceived ideas about teaching styles at university. For those whose educational experience was limited to initial schooling there was, therefore, an assumption that teaching would resemble the didactic and formal approaches used in schools. 'When I first came I thought it was going to be like school - teacher tells you what you do and you do it' (Helen). For a minority it was a shock to discover that they were not going to be spoon-fed. They had to learn to become independent in their learning approaches:

> At first getting use to a lecture/seminar environment was very strange. The education I had I was really spoon-fed and its such a transition to come into a university environment and its sort of well there's a question, go off and just do it (Jenny).

Participants were asked about their attitudes towards lectures and seminars, and to what extent these aided learning. Attitudes varied as to whether or not lectures or seminars were preferred. The critical factor pivoted on the teaching skills of the lecturer rather than the different teaching contexts of lectures and seminars. For 2+2 students the situation was different as they compared lecture and seminar styles between the FE college and university.

Initially the first concern with lectures was to demystify and decode the academic discourse used in all disciplines. For example, 'I wondered what on earth I was doing here because of the language used but I persevered and now I enjoy it'. Another student declared that listening to lectures was like 'being on another planet at first'. Once this obstacle had been overcome lectures were generally viewed useful as a tool and framework for guiding one's own learning. Getting use to learning through lectures and seminars was part of the socialisation process of becoming a student. Becker and Strauss's (1956, 1970) work on adult socialisation provides a useful comparison for understanding how adults adapt to institutional settings:

> The person, as (s)he moves in and out of a variety of social situations, learns the requirements of continuing in each situation and of success in it. If (s)he has a strong desire to continue, the ability to assess accurately what is required, the individual turns himself into the kind of person the situation demands (Becker and Strauss, 1970: 279).

Goffman's (1961) study, *'Asylums'* offers greater insight as he identifies two stages to the processes of dealing with institutional life: primary and secondary adjustment. Although it is looking at inmates in a total institution the conceptual framework is applicable to the mature students in this study. On entering Warwick they had to 'learn the ropes' of being a learner. This is primary adjustment. Once this had been acquired the adult students, in a similar way to the inmates in Asylums, used their new knowledge to manipulate the system to their advantage, such as getting seminar times changed. Goffman describes this as:

> ...secondary adjustments, defining these as any habitual arrangement by which a member of an organization employs unauthorized means, or obtains unauthorized ends, or both, thus getting round the organization's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be (Goffman, 1961: 172).

Many students adopted an instrumental approach to lectures: they clarified the issues and provided a coherent structure for essay writing and material for examinations. In particular they provide a valuable introduction to a new topic.

For part-time students obtaining concise information for essays and examinations was an important objective of lectures, as time is a critical factor. One person explained that 'some lectures are dynamic and I come out of them feeling really good'. However, not all participants shared favourable opinions about lectures. Some were critical of the ability of some lecturers to teach. In critiquing lecturers' teaching styles they were indirectly presenting their perspectives on what constitutes good pedagogy for adult students:

> Some lectures are not very well structured and delivered. It creates a sense of confusion and anxiety because you do not understand what the lecturer is trying to explain (Lynne).

The quality of a lecture, therefore, 'varies tremendously depending on who the tutors are, quite horrifyingly so' as some lecturers were deemed to be 'more competent' than others. Participants also held a mixture of positive and negative attitudes about seminars. Again the quality of seminars varied according to the skill of the lecturer:

> If the tutor is sensitive and responsive to the educational needs of students, seminars are very fertile in intellectual stimulation. Sometimes tutors indulge themselves in seminars

> in their favoured ways, values and ideas and they clock watch if they have not prepared and it shows (Stephen).

Several preferred seminars to lectures because they are interactive. However, common complaints included the fact that the topic discussed in a seminar did not always relate to the lecture and was, therefore, interpreted as not being relevant. This was particularly the case if the tutor who leads the seminar is different from the person who gave the lecture. Tutors were also criticised for 'going off at a tangent' or a 'waste of time' in that discussions meandered rather than adhering to a clear structure:

> Sometimes you can come in and you need not have bothered. Sometimes you can come in and they can be really good and you can get a lot of notes. You need good notes for revision. Sometimes they are just waffle (Dalvinder).

Inconsistency in the delivery of lectures and seminars was a common theme echoed by participants. Seminars, however, provide an important social space for mature students to interact with lecturers and younger students. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach is relevant here, as seminars offer a stage for adult students to present the self to others.

Studying: Writing Essays and Assessment

Note-taking was something that had to be learnt quickly:

> My daughter is at university and the way she works she is prepared for it all through the system and it is much easier but it just is not for me. I just have to keep working at it. It is very long winded. Since I started I have got myself more organised and I have got better and my marks seem to reflect it. But I have got to work at it (Peter).

Writing their first essay was an anxious time for many participants. Most admitted that the quality of their first essay was poor. Paul explained: 'it was knowing what they wanted and the way they wanted it written'. Anxiety centred around the uncertainty of not knowing what level of work was expected for a degree. Some lecturers consciously gave more support and constructive feedback to adults when marking essays. 'I might be more tolerant and constructive in one's comments - less scathing in the light of circumstances, experiences and where people are coming from... They need structure for development' (Sociology).

Attitudes towards assessment evoked contradictory thoughts. Assessment at Warwick is a mixture of assessed assignments and examinations. A strong dislike of examinations as a form of assessment was expressed by most participants because they produced feelings of fear, anxiety, exhaustion and nervousness (Bourner et al 1991). All felt that they under-performed in examinations. Sitting in an examination hall also brought back memories of schooldays:

> I am scared stiff quite frankly sitting there at an exam because I have not done it for years. That is one area where I would have liked a pre-run, a mock exam That would be beneficial. I did not achieve what I thought was my potential because of my lack of skill in doing a written exam (Adam).

Yet at the same time a pragmatic approach was taken. Several wanted examinations to be included as part of the assessment procedure as they were less time-consuming than assignments:

> The snag with assessments is that you can go on for ever trying to make sure that they are perfect. You will only end up with a few more marks for three or four more hours work. It is very complicated really. I think on the whole I prefer assessments but there is a tendency to do just the work for assessments and not worry about the rest of your work (Jean).

These comments echo some of the dilemmas adults experienced with their studies. On entering Warwick they had preconceived ideas of what studying would be like at a university. The reality did not always match their ideals. The adult students were eager to learn, to widen and expand their knowledge base. They wanted to read as widely as possible to study a topic in depth. They also wanted to spend time perfecting assignments. Participants discovered that the pace of ten week terms is hectic and does not allow time for all the books on a reading list to be read. Reading widely simply put pressure on the workload. At the beginning of their student career many found this difficult to come to terms with as it contradicted their image of studying at university:

> You have not got enough time to, perhaps, do as much reading as you would like. The workload is so heavy that you have to try and balance it out. When you get to the interesting stuff, if it does not relate to your essay you feel that you have been wasting your time reading it. You have to concentrate on things that are just to do with your essay (Hyacinth).

To survive, participants had to change their attitudes towards learning. For example, some chose not to write class essays:

> Lectures and seminars are much easier this year as I am able to rationalise the workload more. You get brutal and say to lecturers 'I am sorry but I am not doing that class essay. It is my final year and I want to concentrate on my finals'. You take more responsibility (Joyce).

Over the period of their study the adult student culture matured. Collectively adults learnt how to cope with the system: fewer topics were chosen for revision, less books were read. Passing examinations and being successful with assignments became the prime goal of studying, rather than pursuing knowledge for knowledge's sake. Realism replaced idealism. Using Goffman's conceptual framework they were exhibiting signs of secondary adjustment to the institution.

This pattern of behaviour was noted in a study on the culture of medical students. 'Students reason from their definition of the situation: if there is more to do than can be done in the time available, we can solve the problem by taking short cuts' (Becker et al, 1961: 117). In doing so the : 'group reaches a consensus on how to deal with much of what is problematical in its environment' (Becker et al , 1961: 135).

Bringing Life Experiences to Learning

Adult educationalists (Knowles, 1990, Brookfield, 1996) stress that what differentiates adult learners from other learners is the life experiences they bring to the learning situation. Social science and humanities subjects are popular with adults because the discourse is conducive to inclusion of life experiences. Essays and, particularly seminars, enable participants to give expression to life experiences. The areas of life from which experiences were discussed in the public arena of seminars differed according to gender. The women, for example, as noted by Edwards (1993) discussed family lives, bringing up children, and gender experiences in sociology and law seminars. In contrast, men refrained from discussing their private lives; the public world of work, however, was acceptable.

Mature students are not homogeneous. The younger adults in their early twenties criticised older students for drawing on their life experiences too much in seminars. One common theme, however, was that academic study enabled both the women and the men to reflect upon past life experiences more theoretically and critically:

> Studying sociology has made me look more critically. Your experiences are put into theory. Maybe that was the factor for me, being able to do that more than the younger students and also with being Asian and being a woman. I have got so much knowledge of my own personal life to think about - even issues which relate to my parents (Dalvinder).

Sociology lecturers also discussed the fit between adults choosing sociology as a subject to study and life experiences. ' I think it is autobiographical for adults to do sociology'.

Teaching Mature Students: Lecturers' Perspectives

Departments are not culturally homogeneous and this study revealed diversity across the departmental system. For Becher (1989) the behaviour of departments is closely linked to the nature of the academic discipline.

Certain departments, such as Sociology and Law, at Warwick are more favourable and supportive towards teaching adults than others, such as Biological Sciences. As learning is the focus of adult student life the characteristics of a department play an influential role in determining the quality of undergraduate student life (Becker and Geer, 1961).

Lecturers were asked if they enjoyed teaching adults. With only one or two exceptions all were positive. Reasons given shared a commonality across the four departments studied. Words such as highly motivated, enthusiastic and committed featured frequently.

Teaching methods in the 'old' universities tend to be traditional and didactic. Lecturers were asked if they had modified their teaching styles as a result of having mature students in their groups. Most had not. 'Teaching adults does not change my teaching style. I do not see why they should need different methods' (Biological Sciences). Those that reflected upon their teaching were predominantly in the Sociology Department:

> I have moved towards group work and accessible seminar discussion teaching. My aim is to make these courses accessible and useful to adults who may not have been in an educational environment for many years (Sociology).

Another Sociology lecturer elaborated that adults bring to the attention of lecturers what constitutes good teaching practice.

Seminars are arenas where the presence of mature students is welcomed by many lecturers. Mature students' voices help seminars to become interactive and dynamic. An Arts Education lecturer complained that she finds it difficult to get a response from younger students while 'mature students realise that talking is part of the learning process'. For her, teaching mixed groups of younger and mature students has become problematical as it feels like she is teaching two distinct groups. Adults inform lecturers if they do not understand what is being discussed in a seminar or, as an arts education lecturer explained, 'they give me feedback about my teaching'.

One sociology lecturer had to adjust his teaching approach in seminars to take into account the vociferousness of the mature students as they dominate the verbal space:

> They are less inclined to just take what you say and not come back at you if they feel that they do not understand or there is a problem with what you are saying. It comes back to the issue of them being challenging and so on. I have adopted a teaching style which is more interactive. In the context of seminars having a certain number of matures in one sense makes life easier as they are willing to participate in discussions so that discussions can be student-centred rather than having to make a large input oneself. The difficulty arises when there is a mixture of matures and non-matures and the ones who are not mature are not as expressive so you have to bring them in so that the seminar does not become swamped by the matures (Sociology).

Some recognised the importance of life experiences in relation to the learning process and tried to incorporate the use of life experiences in their teaching. For example, an Arts Education lecturer who teaches literacy and teaching skills for the school classroom to students explained:

> The subject is very appropriate for their learning needs and most of the mature people are very interested, in that a lot of them have had their own children and can refer directly back to their own experience even if they have not been in the classroom very much. In the third year they write an extended piece on learning to read and a lot of them use their own children as a model. In fact it is a very interesting piece of work.

Some stressed that the life experiences which adults bring to the learning process can be problematical. Attitudes may become entrenched, often in a narrow way. A labour studies lecturer noted:

> Part-time degree male factory workers are rough and ready Marxists when they arrive in the sense that they see manual workers as the core of the working class, male manual workers, and a nice simple division between us and them. It is nice to see them branching out or realise that 'them' are not just bosses and that this army of women workers have different things to offer. To see these sorts of things opening up I have found very enjoyable (Sociology).

He also believes that adults come to study to escape from their life experiences: 'I tend not to encourage people to draw too much on their experience...It is people moving on from their past experience (Sociology).

Another problem is that some find it difficult to acquire the skills to enable them to conceptualise and theorise about their life experiences:

> Mature students have the advantage of having life experiences but the question is can they actually convert it into the conceptual side of things. This is a problem with some of the more intellectually, alert, lively but less disciplined mature students. It is very difficult to get them to actually do that. They are interested and motivated but it's that transition from generalised perceptions about society that one gets on a day-to-day basis and actually sticking it into a sociological and analytical framework. That can be problematic on occasions (Sociology).

Summary

All students felt that the self had changed. Self development and individual empowerment was evident:

> Knowledge is wonderful. I am questioning things. Why did I get to forty before I went to university? I have learnt so much. Whatever happens no one can take the three years away. It has been like gold. I have really enjoyed it (Pamela).

Learning became an important aspect of their lives. In Goffman's (1961) term many became 'institutionalised' by the end of their study. Most lecturers stated that the presence of adults enriched the teaching situation. For this group of lecturers adults are just as academically capable as younger students. However, teaching approaches and institutional structures remain geared towards younger students. Adults have to learn how to fit into this. Perhaps, as West discusses, 'The arrival of large numbers of adults into higher education might tilt the pedagogic and epistemological balance towards a dialogical and more integrated learning culture' (1996: 204).

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Connecting the personal and the social: using auto/biography for interdisciplinary research and learning about experience

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In this paper we address the theme of making connections in the education of adults in that we explore how the use of an auto/biographical methodology can help us to connect individual and social-structural features of experience as well as psychological and sociological frames of analysis. We describe and analyse a collaborative experiment in which we have been engaged over the last year; this experiment has involved making recordings of structured conversations with one another and applying to the resulting text interpretative frameworks derived from psychoanalysis, sociology, feminism and anthropology, in order to develop a shared thematic analysis and to explore the intersection in individual lives between culture and psyche.

Auto/biography in postmodernity

We recognise that our interest in linking intimate, micro-cultural and social-structural frames of reference connects us with a much larger and developing postmodern conversation about identities, about the nature of subjectivity, about what might constitute the basis of human agency in fast-changing times, and about the contemporary direction of education and learning. Interest in the use of auto/biographical research methods and life histories has developed rapidly in the study of adult learning and in some social scientific disciplines. Feminists and oral historians, in particular, have sought in recent years to give greater space and significance to personal and intimate life. This is partly a matter, as Evans (1993) has written, of establishing that culture and psyche are part of the same piece. History can be seen to weave its way into the most intimate aspects of human relationships.

The current preoccupation with auto/biography may be understood as an aspect of living and learning in the paradoxical postmodern moment. Story-telling, as part of composing an identity within a fragmenting culture, seems to have become essential at a time when the grand narratives may have proved insufficient, but also when local and familial templates have fractured. As tradition loses hold, as male linear biographical certainties — of school, work and retirement — disintegrate, individuals must choose, whether they wish to or not, among a range of options, as well as constructing more of their own meanings and lifestyles without traditional frames of reference. Where, at the collective level, things stayed more or less constant from generation to generation, and where the meanings attached to rites of passage, such as those marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood, were culturally ingrained, psychic reorganisations could be relatively easily accomplished. In present times, in contrast, self and identity have to be constructed and reconstructed without clear parameters or inter-generational templates as part of a reflexive project of self (Giddens, 1991).

The current interest in auto/biographical approaches amongst university-based adult educators in the UK (apparent in successive collections of SCUTREA papers since 1993) may be seen as a response to the state of flux in the field of adult continuing education, with many departments changing their titles, foci and locations (or having these changes thrust upon them), as some of the concerns of adult education move from margins to mainstream in educational policy. Given the unstable working conditions of many scholars in the field, perhaps it is not too surprising that many of us are seeking to understand our own histories, identities and locations at present.

There are also personal reasons for our own engagement in this enterprise. When we began our collaborative explorations, we were both in the midst of personal transitions; we had both recently

changed jobs and were dealing with the consequent dislocations and challenges, and trying to make sense of our current positions and to plan our future trajectories.

Our collective auto/biographical methodology

About a year ago we decided that we wanted to work together on a project to link psychological and social processes, personal experience and social structures, academic enquiry and more intimate meaning-making. We held several meetings where we took turns to ask questions of one another about aspects of our life histories. We taped the resulting conversations, which were transcribed. Each of us listened to the tapes and read the transcripts in order to identify themes for further analysis. Our conversations ranged widely and included reference to our respective family histories and our feelings about these histories, the identities we constructed for ourselves and the reference groups to which we belonged, critical incidents in our educational histories, significant influences (both textual and interpersonal) on our intellectual development, and our favoured metaphors for making sense of our places in the world as well as our styles of approach to life and work. Some extracts from these conversations are included in this paper.

We have been talking to each other about adult learning for over a decade, and in recent years, in diverse projects, we have both mined our subjectivities extensively for research purposes. About five years ago we identified a common interest in the use of auto/biographical approaches in research, teaching and learning. Linden had read one of Nod's pieces of auto/biographical writing (Miller 1993) and wrote to her with feedback highlighting instances of empathy and similarity of educational experience, and identifying absences or silences in the text. In particular, Linden felt that Nod's use of a predominantly sociological framework precluded the possibility of dealing with some intrapersonal or psychological processes:

> I noticed that your self in the story was primarily a social and historical self, as I suppose it's likely to be, given you are a sociologist. I wondered about your psychological self, though ... you said little about personal hangups, your own emotional struggles ... and how these had affected your development as a learner and researcher.

When Linden's book on the auto/biographical experiences of adult learners (West 1996) was published, Nod read and responded to his text. She was particularly intrigued by the material which dealt with Linden's own life history, not least because it revealed that she and Linden had a shared identity as working-class children who became upwardly mobile as a result of being selected for grammar school on the basis of the 11-plus examination, or, in shorthand, as 'working-class kids made good'. In one of our recorded conversations, Nod acknowledged that

> ... until I read that early part of your book, I had assumed that you were much more distant from me in terms of your class of origin than actually turns out to be the case. That's partly to do with your mode of speaking, I think ... since you have talked about your student interests in drama and the debating society, your accent makes a whole lot more sense, but I had assumed you were much posher than it turns out you are.

From Nod's point of view this was an important reminder of an enduring tendency she recognises in her own behaviour: despite her many years spent in higher education and the consequent loss of the pronounced West Midlands vowel sounds of her youth, she still responds negatively to what she thinks of as posh or affected modes of speech, and is quick to frame (often erroneous) assumptions about others' life histories on the basis of the way they sound.

Shared chronology and contrasting class fractions

We set out timelines which enabled us to establish a number of common historical and cultural referents in our life histories. We recognised some shared objects and events (for example, the Coronation, school milk, outside toilets, the ambience of council houses in the 1950s) and we cited a

number of the same texts (for example, Hoggart 1958; Jackson and Marsden 1962; Williams 1988) among those which aided our understanding of the tensions of school and family life experience. We are of the same generation, although we have noted that the three years which separate us in chronological terms had strong significance in relation to our subcultural experience as undergraduates. We were both students at (then) new universities during the 1960s, but a marked shift in student culture from the middle to late years of that decade is reflected in our varying values and patterns of behaviour during that period and to our current emotional reaction to cultural artefacts such as music from that time.

Having established some similarities in terms of the class position of our respective families of origin, we explored some of the minutiae of our youthful experiences of social class as far as we could reconstruct them in the present, and unpacked the events, stories, sounds and smells, characters and feelings in our histories. As we plotted more precisely our separate locations in the culture and social structure of Britain in the 1950s, we recognised some significant differences between the class fractions to which we belonged and in our relationships with our parents. Nod said:

> Since both of my parents had left school at the minimum leaving age and neither of them enjoyed any sort of success in that regard, never having had the opportunities, I got very quickly to a stage it seemed where I surpassed all the things they might have hoped for, so ... I wasn't carrying the sort of weight that I see a lot of my friends' children carry in the way of living up to expectations.

Linden pointed to a difference between our earlier (and perhaps present) selves:

> ... in class terms, in terms of your educational trajectory, almost everything you did was going to be better than [your parents' expectations] anyway, so there was no pressure, this is the way I read it. This ... intrigued me because my position in class terms was quite different. I do think in some way we're very much on a border point here between culture and psychology, because I was thinking: what was it about my parents' position that meant I had to carry what was experienced as a lot of their ambition in me, at least my mother's? Everything I did in a sense was beyond what they'd achieved in formal education terms, but I guess we are really here into the territory of the psyche as well as culture; culture as in Jackson and Marsden's [1962] sunken middle-class sense: you've got to make up for the loss of middle-class status. Psyche in the sense of my mother in particular feeling very empty and needing a child's achievements which would provide some compensation for that. So objectively we are ... people who are not a million light years from each other in social class terms, and yet we seem to be talking about something quite different in psychological terms.

Nod recognised her reluctance to resort to explanations based on psychological difference, but acknowledged the need for such a paradigm in this instance:

> Although I try to find every other explanation than ones to do with psyche, I guess I would have to accept that in this case psyche is probably what we're talking about. There is something about the minutiae of social relationships, and the way they impact on personality and life scripts and so on, that has given us somewhat different trajectories; or perhaps not so much the trajectories themselves but the way we view them I suppose, because by any kind of objective measure I would have thought your life history would be seen as one of success. But clearly that's not the way that you've perceived it, or not the way you've perceived it at significant moments.

Family stories and football

We tried to capture some aspects of our family relationships, to articulate our feelings about those relationships and to speculate about their impact on our present selves and current work by telling each other stories about the past. One of Nod's narratives went like this:

> I formed the impression pretty early on in childhood that the domestic division of labour has a large amount of inequity associated with it, because ... my mother spent most of my early years not only nursing elderly relatives, not only managing the house which was old and inconvenient, but also providing services (washing, cleaning, cooking and so on) for my father and his brother Bill as well. My uncle never communicated with anybody else in the house by the way ... a lot of my childhood memories involve the pathological lack of communication between the various members of the household ... a vignette: my parents and Bill had evolved over the years a complex set of divisions of labour which seemed to be designed to ensure they didn't have to communicate directly, so he looked after certain things and they dealt with others. Anyway, he paid the rental on the television, so hence it was like his property, which meant ... the rule that he operated with was that if he felt like changing channels or turning the volume up or down, he would do that without any reference to anybody else who was around, even if there was a room full of people ... So the usual pattern was he would watch ITV for most of the time so almost invariably at 10 o'clock in the evening they'd be watching *News at 10* so the chimes of Big Ben would come up and my uncle would look over at my father — they always sat in the same positions in the living room — and say in grunts ... 'what time is it Norman?' and my father would look at his watch and say 'about 10 o'clock Bill' and Bill would turn back to the television and then after about two or three minutes he'd get up, take off his cardigan which he wore inside the house, put it over the back of the chair, take his jacket, which was his sort of outerwear, which was hanging over the back of his chair, put his jacket on and without a word would go out of the room and he'd go and have two pints in the pub which was two or three doors away from where they lived. Five minutes after Bill left, my father would get up and also go round to the pub, but apparently they would never drink in the same bar, you know, they'd drink in separate bars with different lots of people and they'd come back separately. But the 'what time is it Norman?' 'About 10 o'clock Bill' would be almost invariably the one exchange they would have for the day and that was the extent of the communication. Mum and Dad would moan vaguely about his strange ways and as I got older I'd say 'well why don't you say something about it?' and they never had any answer to that. But that was just sort of the way it was. So I don't know. I feel as though this sort of pattern of communication, or non-communication must be something which has propelled me towards being an expert or a student or scholar in the area of communication, but I'm not sure what the line is, or conscious of making decisions about it, but I'm sure there is something in it.

In contrast with the somewhat distant anthropological gaze which Nod trained on rituals of male interaction, Linden offered a participant observational insider perspective in which his pleasure at the male bonding which can be promoted through the shared tribal loyalties of football is apparent:

> [My Dad and I] did communicate early on ... we had the same passionate interest in Port Vale — if a goal was scored I could hug him in a way that I couldn't normally do, if you see what I mean, a social ritualised experience which can be very important particularly if there are no other ways of expressing those sorts of feelings. It's strange because it's only relatively recently that I've been able to come out about this and admit that not only am I a Stoke City supporter, but I'm also a Port Vale supporter. For years and years and years I was a passionate Stoke City supporter ... over the years I followed Stoke City with a very dear friend of mine from university who is also a sociologist ... and I realised I was going through some profound re-evaluation of self and identity, that I was beginning to rediscover Port Vale, i.e. my father, and you know [there's a] kind of loss really involved in that ... So there is an anthropology and a psychology in my story.

Nod later returned to the theme of male rituals and commented on the way in which our contrasting stories of gender had provoked her to reframe some of her observations about affective dimensions of the communication patterns among the men in her family:

> When I've looked at your accounts of your early history and mine I suppose I focus more on the similarities and well there's clearly one major difference in terms of our structural position which is you're a man and I'm a woman, and clearly that was one of the things I thought was interesting about the discussion we had last time: all that stuff about my seeing football as certainly something outside my world view ... I did find that discussion quite helpful in retrospect. It ... cast a bit of a different light on my brother's relationship with my Dad. They're both pretty uncommunicative in many ways, but I can see that there were these aspects of shared, gendered culture around football and perhaps going to the pub ... my brother will sometimes go for a drink with my dad in the pub, which is something I would never consider doing ... whereas he can do it and does it and I can see that ... they don't have to talk very much ... it's just having that shared presence - being in the same place doing sort of blokeish or manly things that somehow helps them perhaps transcend the class differences and cultural differences in their current lifestyles. Anyway, so yes, I've been aware of the gender difference....

'The gender difference' is a topic to which we shall no doubt return as our explorations continue.

Secret societies and invisible colleges

In an earlier exploration of the formation of her academic identity, Nod described how:

> As a postgraduate student I perceived the world of research as a sort of secret society which I was anxious to join. I saw researchers as extremely clever individuals who sat at their desks being inspired and having brilliant ideas. It was some time before it dawned on me that knowledge was developed collectively, and that researchers had interpersonal connections and exercised influence over each other's work. The idea that developments in social science came about as a result of connections between people ... was a revelation. At some point in this new and rather exciting perspective on sociology as network rather than discipline, I read Diana Crane's *Invisible Colleges* (1972), a study of the diffusion of knowledge amongst scientific communities. I thought it was fascinating. (Miller 1994: 82)

One of the ways in which the foregoing analysis may be understood is as a case study in the invisible college of adult educators. We have also attempted to articulate a methodology of shared auto/biographical exploration which highlights links between the personal and the social, significant experience and the resonance, for both of us, of particular disciplinary frames. The methodology also demonstrates some of the possibilities for a synthesis of sociological and psychological analyses of lifelong learning.

Working in this way has been useful to both of us and we hope that in this paper we have indicated some of the strands in an analysis which might be taken much further. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge some of the difficulties which arise in such an enterprise. Working in an interdisciplinary framework is easy to say but trickier to operationalise. We have been stimulated by our dialogue, but we have each at times been puzzled by each other's language and have had to confess to confusions over meaning. We have struggled to arrive at a collective voice in this paper, and we have each been aware of the need to curb tendencies to interpret the other's experience in our own framework or to impose our own preoccupations and accustomed modes of analysis. As another social scientist observes,

> It is rare to have an intellectual dialogue which is not at some point transformed into symbolic cannibalism: my formulation can eat up yours. (Bernstein, 1976: 7)

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College knowledge: power, policy and the mature student experience at university

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Introduction

Several recent reports have highlighted and explored the policy and practical aspects of access to higher education for mature students in Ireland (Morris, 1997; Martin and O'Neill, 1997). The Government Report of the Steering Committee on the Future of Higher Education proposed that mature students as a proportion of full-time entrants should increase to 20 percent of total entrants by the year 2015. Both the Government's recent Green and White Papers on education emphasised the importance of achieving greater equality in education and viewed lifelong learning within higher education as a stimulus to achieving this equality. The Universities Act of 1997 defined one objective of the university as: "to facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education."

In these reports and legislation there is a concern for equality and disadvantage. The Steering Committee's report summarised this link;

> Mature students from disadvantaged backgrounds deserve to be given access to higher education both because of the disadvantages which they experienced as school leavers, and because of their on-going relative disadvantage vis-à-vis other adults (1995, p. 139).

Clancy (1995) also makes a connection between "socio-economic and age disparities" in higher education. He echoes many of the recommendations of other reports when he states that second-chance education;

> must not be seen as a luxury which we can attend to when the demographic pressure has passed at the end of this decade. Social justice and economic considerations dictate that it be seen as a current priority (1995, p. 115).

The question that faces the government, higher education institutions, adult education advocacy organisations and mature students themselves, is the following: How can institutions of learning increase their access so that more mature students can avail of Irish higher education? We argue in this paper that the debate should move away from a focus on access and instead discuss issues of accessibility to the institutionalised knowledge and power of the university. We studied the experience of mature students registered at university to highlight the difficulties students face after they have gained access. In this way we wish to connect the debates surrounding access and mature student provision to the issue of institutional power, knowledge and privilege. As we show in the paper, it can also function as a way in which adult education research makes connections between the teaching and learning of adults.

Methodology

Our research was carried out in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in 1997. It was funded by the Department of Social Welfare. A detailed questionnaire was sent to all 298 mature students who were registered on the full-time Arts and Science degree courses at the university. We received 164 completed questionnaires, a 55% response rate. The information from the questionnaires provided extensive demographic information about the mature student population.

In order to understand the experiences of mature students, we took a sample of twenty respondents and conducted semi-structured interviews. We also carried out four focus groups. One was undertaken at the beginning of our study. The other three related to specific issues we wanted to address in greater detail, i.e. the Third Level Allowance Scheme, lone parents, and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) as an access route. (VTOS is an EU funded education and training programme which allows long-term unemployed adults to complete second level education while maintaining social welfare entitlements and benefits.)

Findings

In this paper we want to discuss mature students and their academic success, or lack of it. From our questionnaire data, we concluded that those mature students who came to college with vocational ambitions and who were already grounded in the ways of the university (had taken a foundation course) were more likely to do better academically than those who came to college for the sake of learning and had not taken a university foundation course. What do these findings mean? The interviews provided us with rich information about the ways in which mature students negotiated their way through college, both academically and personally, and allowed us to understand better the process by which some mature students do better at exams than others.

In the interviews we wanted to understand the kinds of problems adults faced at university. The question we addressed in detail was: What were the most significant factors involved in the success of students? We found that financial issues, relationships with partners and other external commitments, the kind of support they received at college, and the type of access route they took, all had a bearing on their success. It became clear that, although these issues were important and presented difficulties for students, it was the learning process itself that presented students with the most difficult barrier to achieving a degree. What we found intriguing was how mature students attempted to meet both their own learning needs and the requirements or needs of the college. Susan Weil, in previous work on mature students (1986; 1988), refers to the students learning needs as their "learner identity" and refers to the needs of the college as the "learning context." She found dissonance between the two identities.

We take this idea further. We argue that what exists between the individual mature student, with their experiential knowledge, and the college, with its highly structured, abstract theoretical knowledge, is a latent conflict that manifests itself in various ways. In particular the conflict arises in the processes of essay writing and examinations. These are the two areas that caused major anxiety for students and created dissonance for their learner identity.

Essay writing:

Essay writing can cause significant problems for mature students, particularly for those who have had no previous experience of higher education. Their only real experience of writing was at school. Many can, at best, just about remember the kind of rules that applied then. The university has a different set of rules when it comes to the structure and content of essays. Much of the anxiety mature students experienced was caused by not knowing what was expected of them. The traditional academic structure of an essay with an emphasis on description and analysis, are known to those who have worked in the academic field for a longer time. Liam was made aware of what was required of him when he handed in his first essay;

> my history tutor in first year, she was excellent, and when she handed my essay back, and when I read it, I couldn't believe I had written it, it was like a sixteen year olds. I had a bit of a clash with what I felt I should write. I think it was a lack of confidence in my ability to write. I kind of stopped myself writing....It was basically a narrative with no references, no quotations. I had given my own interpretation...I suppose that had to do with my own view of education being participatory.

"A nightmare" is how Julie described the experience of her first essay. In the following quote, she provides a stark portrayal of the kinds of problems mature students face when their understanding of

what is expected of them does not coincide with that of their lecturers and tutors. She did not do as well as she hoped in her first essay;

> I was at a talk and there was a woman talking, and she said she cried over an essay, and I laughed and thought, cry over an essay? I could never make it to the bridge, tears, God, and I thought "cop yourself on" and I was terrified someone would see me....and there were roadworkers, and seriously I nearly died. Got to a phone anyway...and I said get (sister's names) to ring me. Nobody rang me until it was ten o'clock at night and I was going round in floods of tears getting the dinner....Half ten at night I was still crying, my younger sister rang, and I answered the phone and told her I hadn't stopped crying since half eleven that morning, and she went, what? And I said I'm never going back there again. The amount of work I put in to the essay, and she (the lecturer) just said to me, you just passed it, and it was like putting a knife in my back, and she went, oh for god's sake, and she turned around and said, that's the thing about mature students. And I went what do you mean? And she went, you take everything to heart...it was a major shock just passing it, 'cause I had done a lot of work...I went up to the lecturer and said to her, I can't do this (the essay), and she said just go home and write from the heart, so I went home and wrote this flowery essay...

When Julie and Liam both wrote their essays in a flowery and personalised way they had not yet learned that what was required was a more de-personalised content and style. Achieving this brought better essay marks. Mary also had trouble with the essays, but she did much better, precisely because she de-personalised the essay-writing process. As she put it, the first essay;

> nearly killed me, I got 68 but it nearly killed me doing it cause I never did an essay, it was a different thing. I mean I don't know about analysing, from all I knew, even on the diploma course, that was just facts, facts, facts, it took a lot, I had to twist my whole mind around, but I did very well in it.

This "twisting the mind around" to suit the wishes of the academic faculty is a major factor influencing their success or failure. This intellectual game-playing was also a factor when it came to the techniques necessary for effective studying.

Study-skills:
Students must learn how to study and quickly develop learning skills if they are to succeed. Tom, when asked why he felt people failed at college, had this to say;

> I think they failed to grasp...they missed what it was, it's a very subtle thing. I know a few people who failed, who you know were just off centre, they weren't grasping, they were working very hard, but they weren't working at what they should have been, but they weren't concentrating...they should have been doing half an hour instead of two hours. the same people tend to grasp the wrong idea, the lecturer is saying something, and he's saying it in black and white, I want you to do the following, and he'd say it that slow, and they don't pick it up, and I think it's concentration.

What is this "very subtle thing" that Tom is talking about? John provided the following explanation;

> the one insight that I had was that you can't do everything, and there's certain areas that you zone in on, there are certain areas that are more important...it was something that one of the lecturers said. Someone said, don't read whole books, read chapters.

Jim also learnt in his first year at college that "there was no need to take down everything the lecturer says". Irene agreed, adding that what you take down during lectures is fundamental to success. She got 75% in her first essay by "making information her own". She got to this stage;

> first of all, by a desire to get through first year. I knew that I had to do more than just give back the facts if I was going to get good grades, so, also being interested in what I was doing, and wanting to go beyond what I was given...(learnt this) mostly from what the lecturers were saying. To get the good marks you have got to give a critique. I just knew that it would be enough to get an honour, but not a first class honour.

In many ways, what these mature students are doing here is learning the "tricks of the trade", learning what we can call "**college knowledge**" (Fleming and Murphy, 1997). The ability of students to learn this knowledge is a determining factor in mature student's success. Trish, in her twenties, provided a good example of this, when she explained the difference between her and older mature students;

> we were asked to study a particular diagram in class, and learn it off, and this older friend of mine was saying, that arrow shouldn't be there, and I was saying, it's there so just learn it that way, and she was going, but why is it there and I said, I don't know and don't care, just learn it so you can regurgitate it in the exams and get marks for it....She wanted to know the mechanisms and the nitty gritty of it, which would need a bit more knowledge than anyone would have in second year....It wasn't necessary to know the nitty gritty in second year, and by asking why, she was actually dragging herself deeper into the mire.

So Trish felt that she could "run with the hare and dash with the hounds". It is very clear that, for Trish, the dissonance between her own learner identity and the college identity was diminished. It was a very conscious process for her. The only way she could reduce the dissonance and get through college was to give the college what they wanted - **college knowledge**. She put it most clearly when she named two kinds of learning;

> Yeah, one is the monkey business and the other is the research....In Departments, each person is looking for something different and you can do the monkey business for one lecturer and the research for another....It's a question of finding the dynamic equilibrium between the two of them...it's about passing your exams as a means to an end....I knew what was necessary to pass this time.

In contrast, Paul did not learn some of these tricks of the trade and did not learn how to play the game properly. He, as a result, had to repeat first year because of the way he approached the writing of his exam questions. As he explains;

> the head of [names Department] couldn't understand why I failed, and they were really worried. They thought they had got the marks wrong or something. They said I had attended the lectures. I got these great results in my essays, and then they looked at my exam papers and they found that I was averaging a page and a half per answer, and it's just not on, you know...I learnt to give lot longer answers basically (laughs). Skill in the economy of space.

It is the learning of skills such as the one Paul described that is more than likely the major academic experience of mature students at college. This process of skills learning, however, is really only a manifestation of the underlying latent conflict between these mature learners and the learned of the college. The process through which mature students go in attaining these skills is one of constant compromise with the demands of the college, of a giving in to an authority which will not accept their experiential knowledge. It is important to point out in this instance that the college never compromises. The students themselves are always on the losing end, and the process of skills learning, of playing the game, is the only realistic way students have of losing less.

Discussion and Conclusion

We found that when it came to exam results and generally doing well at university, it was the mature students' ability to understand the academic culture and its tricks of the trade, i.e. 'college knowledge,' that played a key role in their success. Those students who did not grasp the essence of

college knowledge, did not fare as well. We went further and were able to confirm from our data that, in so far as this is a conflict, the university wins.

Zygmunt Bauman (1990, p. 8), Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990) refer to and discuss the existence of these different kinds of knowledge. Bauman (1990, p. 8) eloquently argues that sociology is a way of thinking about the human world that is in contrast to common sense thinking. The sociologist is more interested in the general than the particular; in accumulating and testing evidence rather than guessing and relying on individual beliefs, etc. If we replace sociological knowledge and common sense knowledge (Bauman's categories) with college knowledge and experiential knowledge respectively, then our argument is close to Bauman.

Unfortunately, Bauman does not ask the adult education question: How to help a student move from a common sense to a sociological understanding. How can someone embedded and even submerged in common sense or experience based knowledge be brought to explore a different kind of knowledge that is more critical; more interested in generality than anecdote; in logic, evidence and testing rather than guessing and individual beliefs? How can the student be helped to move to a more abstract, theoretical, contextualising, investigation of reality?
This is discussed by Horton and Freire (1990, p. 150-151) and both tell similar stories. Freire's version is about;

> ...a travelling salesman....He got lost and didn't know which way to go. He found a little boy beside the road, and he said, 'Hey there son, do you know the way to Knoxville? The boy said, 'No, sir.' And he said, 'Do you know the way to Gatlinburg?' 'No, sir.'...And he said, 'Boy, you don't know much, do you?'
> 'No, sir, but I ain't lost!'

The task of the university is not so much to transfer knowledge but to help students 'get some distance from their own experience in order to understand the reasons why they are having this kind of experience' (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 156). Students arrive at university and 'bring with them their knowledge at the level of common sense, and they have the right to go beyond this level of knowledge' (Horton & Freire, 1990, p.157). Both adult educators agree that teacher and student must come together critically and dialectically and 'make this walk with people' (p. 158). They are pointing to a different relationship between student and teacher and a different way of constructing knowledge.

Adults as learners thus pose interesting and significant questions as to what constitutes a university and its knowledge. This may challenge the university to redefine access and accessibility not just as administrative issues but as core issues dealing with the identity of the university and its understanding of knowledge, learning, teaching, curriculum and teacher/student relationships. It involves a reconstruction of the very understanding of knowledge and learning. The university needs to become 'adult educated.' Then there is the real possibility of discovering new frameworks, paradigms and world views. The university might then become a location for transformative rather than formative learning (Mezirow, 1996). All may yet be redefined by adult education and mature students!

So, in conclusion, we believe that through our research, we have made connections between the teaching of the university and its understanding of learning. It was by making these connections that we made policy proposals - the transformation of the university. That to us is the real goal of research in the education of adults.

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Researching flexible learning within the postmodern: a role for the 'specific intellectual'?

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Post-compulsory education policies in many OECD countries including Australia currently emphasise the need for flexibility. It is increasingly argued within policy texts that individuals as well as organisations must become more flexible and that in order to become so they must continually learn (Edwards 1997). In Australia discourses of 'flexible learning' have emerged within the institutional context as a response to policy argument and government financial strategy. However, their significance and consequences have not been much elaborated, either within policy documentation or academic literature. Where flexible learning is discussed it is almost always presented as an already constituted 'object', a phenomenon which is already known and unproblematic. This often means that it is assumed to signify only a 'mixed-mode' or 'high tech' approach to the delivery of learning. Emerging discussions therefore tend to assume that flexible learning exists already as a known object which makes learning more efficient or effective, rather than to see that both discussion and practices as construct which may have effects other than those assumed. Such discussions are therefore focussed on how it can be done, or done better, rather than asking what it is or what it does.

In this paper it is argued that whilst flexible learning can be understood as a necessary response to a post-modern social condition, it can also be seen to contribute to this situation through its effects. It is argued that specifically within the university these effects include a breaking down of the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge and a disruption of the teaching-research nexus. The paper begins an analysis of what flexible learning is and what it does. Drawing on Foucault's work (1979, 1980), in the first section, the modern idea of the university and academic is 'unsettled'. In the second section, a 'story' of flexible learning as both knowledge and power is constructed. In the third section, through an analysis of a small selection of contemporary literature, the role of the academic is argued to be reworked through flexible learning. In this situation it becomes clear that the question of who carries out research generally within the post-modern moment and, more specifically, who carries out research into flexible learning, are important. To answer these questions Foucault's (1980) notion of the 'specific intellectual' is considered in the final section for its ability to provide new understandings for researchers and practitioners of flexible learning.

The modern idea of the university and academic

The view that research is the primary role of the academic and function of the university is still current in Australia, even within the contemporary context of a 'massification' of higher education. This view was held by the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee during the period of transition from a binary to a unified system of higher education, and it is not surprising that it continues to be upheld, as, without it, the idea upon which the system of higher education is based becomes open to question. Although it is increasingly questioned within the contemporary moment, and is certainly not always seen to be upheld in practice, if the prime role of research were to be completely lost, a radical rethinking of the role of the university and the academic within it would be required.

The modern idea of the university is displaced increasingly within the post-modern moment. through the work of poststructuralist writers in education (Gore 1993, Taylor 1995, Usher & Edwards 1994, Usher, Bryant, & Johnston 1997), much of which draws on the work of Foucault. In his consideration of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the scientific discourses of modernity Foucault (1979) points to the possibility that the idea of the university has acted to conceal the operation of power. This situation, he proposes, may have led us to misunderstand what it is that we do. Foucault argues that the conditions for the emergence of the scientific disciplines occurred by chance. Rather than being a natural or rational outcome of the progressive development of knowledge as is often suggested, the disciplines and knowledge are shown to have emerged as part of the exercise of power. This happened at a moment in history where a new form of power was deployed as a means for the

governance of populations. Foucault's work therefore foregrounds the constitution and operation of the university within 'systems of governance' of populations. For Foucault, these systems came into being as forms of social control within the nineteenth century, through the emergence of a particular relation between power and knowledge which he terms 'biopower'. The university, and education and training systems together, became an expression of 'biopower'. Although this view unsettles the modern idea of the university, it is also productive. With a frame of reference drawn from Foucault's work, the role of the university and academic, the teaching-research nexus, and flexible learning can be understood in new ways.

Flexible learning as both knowledge and power

How can a story of flexible learning be told where it can be seen as both knowledge and power? Within the postmodern, the 'stories' of education work *as* power. For example the modern tale of the 'liberation' of the individual from ignorance can now be seen as a discourse which masks the exercise of power and brings forth learners as subjects for improvement. Theories of education are both disciplinary knowledge and 'disciplining' practices. They tell educators what to do, legitimise what they do and are an exercise of power which produces 'active subjects' with certain capacities to act. Within the postmodern, labels of 'liberated' and 'unliberated', 'educated' and 'uneducated', are diversified. Although these binaries continue to be drawn upon, other labels are constituted as an increasing pace of social change 'requires' increasing systemic efficiency. New labels allow new spheres of intervention and new disciplining practices. These can be seen as attempts to bring about change which improve and extend the influence of biopower. The labels of 'competence' and 'incompetence', 'flexibility' and 'inflexibility' can be seen in this light. They allow more of the population to become productive, and the idea of an elite education is marginalised as a move is made towards mass systems of learning within advanced industrial nations. The spread of learning, increasingly as open learning (Nicoll & Edwards 1997), life-long and flexible learning (Edwards 1997), becomes a way of further increasing and extending the 'policing' of populations within society to make them more useful. These new labels place the onus of responsibility on the learner to take charge of their own development—to self-'police'—and as such they are mechanisms of power which increase efficiency. Neither 'liberation' nor 'agency' indicate escape from power, but are specific exercises of it.

Discourses of education act to identify problems, or 'anomalies' (the unliberated, uneducated, incompetent, inflexible) through the constitution of social boundaries (for example, the boundary between those who are flexible and unflexible). These are identified 'scientifically' so that technologies of biopower can be in a position to govern them (Nicoll 1997). The importance of discoursing a problem scientifically into being, rather than within any other kind of (non-scientific) discourse, is that in this act the problem is transformed into a technical problem which then requires a technical solution—the outcome of such a scientific discoursing into being is that a 'technical matrix is established' (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982; 196). Flexible learning can be argued to constitute the anomaly of 'inflexibility' which can now be identified and tackled as a technical problem which needs a technical solution. A new technical matrix is put in place, or an old one is reconfigured.

The discourses formed as the technical matrix around the problem of 'inflexibility' are required by Foucault's analysis to be focussed upon the measurement of the problem, its various subdivisions and the means of its solution, in order that learning can produce individuals and institutions who become flexible. These discourses can be seen to be evolving throughout advanced industrial nations, particularly through the uptake of ideas of 'flexibility' but also in related discourses of 'learner-centredness' and 'open learning'. Such discourses constitute a complex matrix within which the problem 'inflexibility' is productive in order to produce 'flexibly' active subjects .

The problem of inflexibility and its subdivisions emerge in 'flexible delivery' (focussing on the range of choices available to students—pace, place, time, content, assessment and so forth), and 'flexible learning' (focussing more on whether students are able to make appropriate choices in their learning and in the skills that they gain in making choices, or dealing with new situations). Solutions to inflexibility emerge within pedagogy as particular strategies and their combinations—'multiple

learning pathways', 'cross-disciplinary' courses, 'specialisations' and 'electives', 'learning modules', 'learning contracts', 'learning portfolios'. Solutions emerge also as emphases on particular learning technologies, such as 'problem-based' (Chambers, 1997), 'technology-based' (Kirkpatrick & Jakupec 1997) and 'self-directed' learning. These develop skills conducive to learner flexibility. Further solutions emerge through the intensification of learning 'advisory', 'guidance' and 'counselling' practices (Makin 1997: Manning, 1997). All such strategies and technologies focus on abilities to respond to new and unpredictable situations—either for the institution or the learner—although none can be said alone to be the solution to the problem of inflexibility.

Flexible learning, the role of the academic and teaching-research nexus

The development of flexible learning in university contexts brings with it changes to the 'disciplinary mechanisms' which have dictated the role of the academic and the constitution of knowledge throughout modernity. The question here is, in what way is the role of the academic and the teaching-research nexus changed?

This question can be answered by and analysis of the changing structures, systems and practices discussed within the literature of flexible learning. For example, there is tendency for learning to take place at a time, pace and place of convenience to the learner. This reduces the physical 'contact' time of the academic with the student. The now 'absent presence' of the lecturer becomes embodied in, for example, learning materials, timetables for assignments and the explicit achievement of certain outcomes. The role of the academic becomes one of the 'planner', 'designer' and 'assessor' of learning, rather than the 'face-to-face' teacher. Where learning from other sources, such as the workplace, is introduced into universities, 'normalising' judgements such as giving feedback and assessing work may be shared to include, for instance, a work supervisor and mentor. This may introduce complexity and conflict into normalisation, as there may be different 'norms' and categorisations arising from the different parties involved in making judgements. The role of the academic is thus changed in that the processes of normalisation may now require negotiation or be decided by others.

There is increased possibility for the overall course content to be determined by the learner themselves, either through choice of modules within or between disciplines, or through the negotiation of learning contracts. With this potential power over the constitution of knowledge is moved partially outwith the walls of the university and across the boundaries of particular disciplines. Here, the boundaries between the disciplines and between the disciplines and other forms of knowledge are potentially blurred, hierarchies of knowledge potentially flattened and informal knowledges brought more to the fore. The growing interest in workplace and experiential learning is suggestive of these processes.

The increasing use of computing technology and changing organisational structures brought about through moves towards flexible learning perhaps change the status of academic work (Campion 1997). An increased focus on computing may have the effect of de-differentiating the skills of the academic from those of many other workers, at least at a superficial glance. The boundaries between work roles change: 'Most importantly the relationship between academics and secretarial and clerical workers is undergoing radical change' (149). The individual and the university is restructured thereby through flexible learning. Campion (1997) explains this as a move from bureaucratic to neo-bureaucratic individual and institutional processes, and differentiated to de-differentiated institutions. Such changes, brought about partly through flexible learning and partly producing it, reformulate both the university and increasingly also professional structures and subjectivities in ways which Campion suggests tend towards uniformity.

General changes in the nexus between academic teaching and research are illustrated also in relation to PhD supervision and research as they develop through flexible learning. Evans (1997) identifies the emergence of professional or research and coursework doctorates as just such a phenomenon. For him, one overall effect is a reduction in research capability. Increased pressure on academics, now

asked to teach and supervise more students, to be more entrepreneurial, and more involved in quality and accountability activities, leads to a general reduction in individual capacity for research.

This situation is paralleled by a blurring of the boundaries of what counts as 'professional' (Campion 1997, Evans 1997). This occurs as university 'fields of knowledge' do not necessarily map onto professional groupings, and are not necessarily regulated by an external or professional body. The emphasis may be on supervision by those who are not academics, and may not have themselves undergone studies within the discipline. The role of the academic as supervisor changes to one of adviser (Evans 1997).

The term 'professional' becomes increasingly problematic as some professional doctorates 'are defined more in terms of areas of work—for example, business administration, creative arts or technology' (Evans, 1997: 178). Furthermore, the research product of students is now counted as contributory to institutional performance. This research is added in calculations used to decide the amount of federal funding to be allocated to the institution. Knowledge production increasingly looses its base within the modern disciplines of knowledge of the university. The teaching-research nexus is no longer only to be found within the walls of the university but is increasingly re-configured and dispersed.

The role of the specific intellectual

For academics and those working within the 'discipline' of education, in a situation where their work is now seen in relation to both knowledge *and* power, the question is how to work within the postmodern? For Foucault the battle which the academic 'intellectual' must conceive is not any more 'for truth', but 'around truth' (1980: 131). This role, at least for Foucault in the French context, was legitimised through an idea 'transposed' from Marxism—'the "left" intellectual spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice' (Foucault 1980: 125). This 'left' or 'universal intellectual' has been replaced in part by what Foucault calls the 'specific intellectual' who can no longer speak for truth or justice but rather operates politically and struggles at a specific site of practice or within a specific sector. However, this intellectual can work also at a general level. Here, rather than ask questions over the 'truth' of flexible learning, the intellectual asks such questions as how flexible learning becomes truth, and what role it plays in order to become so.

Rather than see the academic as losing power in contemporary moves towards flexible learning, Foucault's work suggests that she or he increasingly operates within 'a polymorphous ensemble of intellectuals' (Foucault 1980: 130) and at a privileged point of intersection where 'exchange' is possible. In taking this role the academic and others operate 'at the level of conjunctural struggles, pressing demands restricted to particular struggles' (Foucault 1980: 130) seeking to unmask the political and economic role of truth. In this context discourses of truth are no longer seen as constituted within the walls of the university, although the academic does still maintain a role in the production of knowledge as part of a wider social network. Although the role is more modest than hitherto conceived and is one shared with others, it is one which differs through its position within the 'ensemble'. Here the academic needs to become more flexible if they are to play an active role within the reconfigured university, the effects of which are uncertain.

The 'truth' of the story and the role it plays

Productive effects can be summarised broadly as they have been indicated through this piece. First, flexible learning does stretch out the influence of university education to an increasing percentage of the population. Second, it places the emphasis of learning and knowledge production on specific and 'non-universal' problems which rise out of material and every-day struggles, in the case of professional doctorates, arising within the professions. Third, it can present a new role for the educator generally in work to delineate the changes in ensembles of rules according to which to discourses of flexible learning operate as 'true', and whereby the 'newly' false is separated out from them. This would enable mappings of the specific changes in effects of power which are attached to

the 'true' within the new discourses of pedagogy (not only that of 'flexible learning') emerging within the contemporary moment. At a time when post-compulsory education policies in many OECD countries argue increasingly that individuals as well as organisations must become more flexible, the empirical mapping of effects of changes in pedagogical practices which are the result of such arguments is obviously important.

This paper has made a contribution to such a project by displacing the 'technical' status of discourses of 'flexible learning' and replacing this with another story. It has attempted to make flexible learning problematic in ways which might not otherwise have been seen. It has indicated that flexible learning can be seen to have effects which may or may not be judged as productive—how they are judged will depend on the criteria against which they are judged. It may be that a new role for members of the learning society emerges, as critical judges of the political and economic effects of technical matrices, in the forms of inequities that they constitute, hegemony that they instate, and subjectivities and knowledges that they allow. Within the changed conditions of the university, academics can have an important role to play in working with others in both teaching and research to address such questions. As adult educators, certain possibilities for flexible learning may have constraints, but they also realise possibilities for more co-operative approaches to teaching and research.

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Professional development, teaching, and lifelong learning: Is there a connection?

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Introduction

Lifelong learning is a phrase that continually appears in the literature from a variety of areas including the government, academics, and the media. The concept and provision of lifelong learning is by its very nature highly complex and multifaceted. I will be arguing that professional development is one aspect of lifelong learning, and that teaching is a significant component within the context of learning. The main focus for the discussion will be the researcher/teacher in Higher Education (HE).

Increasingly teaching is the word at the centre of debates about learning, with the premise that good teaching leads to effective learning. This has recently been reflected within Higher Education by the creation of the Institute of Teaching and Learning. But surely all of us involved in Higher Education have always dealt with the teaching and learning situation, our knowledge both academic and pedagogic has developed. Have we not been involved in lifelong learning or has this been professional development? If it has been development, what is the connection (if any) to lifelong learning?

There are three areas I will be addressing. First, I will clarify the meaning of professional development, explain how it will be used in the discussion, and place it firmly within the context of lifelong learning. The second issue considers the role teaching and learning has for the researcher/teacher in HE. (I use the term teacher specifically, as lecturer infers only one way to give out information). I put forward the notion that teaching has a significant role to play in learning and that within Higher Education the responsibility rests with the researcher/teacher. Finally, I argue that the time is now right within Higher Education to think in terms of the "scholarship of teaching."

Professional development in the context of lifelong learning.

It is important to this discussion to clarify some of the meanings of the various terms associated with professional development, as they have come to mean a variety of things to those associated in education. Watkins and Drury (1994) suggest that there are four groups of strategies for the development of professionals over the next decade:

- developing a new mind set;
- learning to promote and market one's skills, networking and cultivating relationships;
- developing self-insight and taking personal charge;
- developing a range of competencies.

Here, it is useful to examine the term "professional" when applied to teachers. Garnett (1977) suggests three key dimensions:

- A professional will have undergone a lengthy period of professional training in a body of abstract knowledge (Good, 1960; Coulson, 1986; Hughes, 1985), and will have experience in the relevant field, in this case teaching.
- A professional is controlled by a code of ethics and professional values (Barber, 1963, 1978; Coulson, 1986; Hughes, 1985)
- A professional is committed to the core business of the organisation, i.e. the quality of student learning (Coulson, 1986).

If we have key dimensions to what a professional is, and four strategies by which they develop, what role does professional development play?

Within this paper professional development is taken as meaning development for individuals or groups with like needs identified by them or the institution, is career oriented or personal and is long term. It is a generic term, and similar to O'Neil (1994, p 287) will be used in that context.

Although these parameters set the scene for discussion, it does not make explicit the connection between professional development, teaching and the role of lifelong learning. A significant amount of research has discussed the role of professional development and the professional, but the role of teacher's learning has not always been made explored and explained. These include Bolam, 1987; Brown and Earley, 1990; Madden and Mitchell 1993, Dean 1996.

I am suggesting that professional development in Higher Education is a way to improve the quality of learning and teaching of the researcher/teacher, and develop a culture for lifelong learning. This can be achieved through the recognition of the importance of teaching, the teacher, and attributing the status needed to gain that recognition. Opportunities for individuals to extend their knowledge base, skills and teaching activities must be provided for. (This in itself is a very contentious area, and needs to be acknowledged here, but will not be discussed within this paper). Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p 2) suggest that "teacher development as knowledge and skill development" is key to successful long term learning, both of the teacher and their students.

This leaves lifelong learning and its role within professional development to be discussed. Lifelong learning has to do with the development of a range of interactions between educational institutions and their host communities, in this case researchers/teachers, students and Higher Education establishments. All are, or should be, concerned to develop a learning community, where learning is valued, both for the teacher and the student. This must include professional development of those who help to provide learning at all levels. At the level of the individual teacher, systems/authorities should offer opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development work in preparation for lifelong learning if they are to transform the concept of teaching in the way that will enhance learning, and therefore, develop the concept of lifelong learning.

The premise here is that the provision of lifelong learning is heavily dependent on the skills, knowledge and professional competency of the teaching profession. The challenge will be to extend and broaden the frameworks of teaching and learning activities in Higher Education. This must incorporate teachers and teacher educators, as they will be at the "coal face" of change. By change, I mean a changing community of learners. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) have showed how teacher development is enhanced when the importance of the working environment is considered. Garnett (1997) also states that the development cannot be alienated from the context of practice. The context may vary across institutions and within Schools or Faculties, all of which are influenced by structures and strategies, that are both formal and informal, internally or externally imposed.

The development of professionals can therefore be taken as a long term process. One which is progressive and goes over the working lifetime of a professional. It is planned, and prioritised, but often such priorities may be in conflict, i.e. that of the individual needs, and those of the institution. However, lifelong learning goes beyond the ***working life*** of a professional. I am therefore suggesting, that professional development is orientated towards the working lifetime of a professional (in this case the researcher/teacher) and that professional development is one element of lifelong learning. If such a premise is to be accepted, there is a need to consider the role of learning for the professional, and how this may affect the role of teaching in Higher Education.

The role of teaching and learning for the researcher/teacher in HE

Practice, in this case teaching, does not happen in a vacuum. It depends on a variety of social, political, and ideological contexts. The practice of teaching in Higher Education and the role of learning for the professional researcher/teacher is equally dependent on the whole educational context, particularly at this point in time, when Universities are facing periods of rapid change. Government statements and documents such as the DfEE ,"Induction of new teachers" (1998), and

the proposed white paper on the Institute of Teaching and Learning, highlighting the present contexts. Any attempt by HEs to change teaching and learning activities, of both students and teachers cannot ignore these documents and proposed changes. Yet consideration must be given to the learning environment of the professional, in preparation of the imposed change. For Higher Education, this means considering how teaching is going to affect the role of learning for the researcher in the pursuit of truth, and the teacher (who is often the same person) applying their theoretical knowledge to a teaching situation. As a member of a university, individuals are not only expected to practise an art or science, but also act as a 'professor' of knowledge (Garnett, 1995, p 49). If this is the case, are the learning needs the same, and can one be classified as "learning" and the other as "development of skills", or is one aspect connected implicitly to the other?

The implication of such questions rests on how we perceive the need to change the researcher/teacher, and what the perceived changes entail in terms of professional development and learning. The present climate in Higher Education suggests that all new teachers (lecturers) will have to obtain some form of formal teaching qualification. The nature of this qualification is open to interpretation and discussion. This presents us with a dilemma, for, if researchers have to be "professionally developed" as teachers, are we applying a 'deficit' model of professional development. By that I mean are we suggesting that something is lacking in the new researcher/teacher and therefore needs to be corrected, in this case teaching skills, and their application to learning situations. Do these have to be corrected or improved before researcher/teachers can deliver quality teaching and subsequent learning outcomes? As Huberman (1995 p 271) points out "these deficits are determined by others, notably by administrators" In this context teachers are seen as objects, rather than subjects, of their professional growth. Yet surely what we should be striving for, if teaching standards in HE are to improve and change, is to understand how researcher/teachers learn and change and the role teaching plays in that change. The interesting concept here for HE with respect to the proposed initiatives, is that these changes in the first instance will be taking place in the workplace. Evidence relating to teacher professional learning and development within the workplace is frequently absent from the literature. What we need to understand is the relationship between specific dimensions of the HE workplace environments and researcher/teacher learning within the framework of lifelong learning.

Teaching as Scholarship

Possible ways forward can be found by considering theories related to adult learning and change in organisations. These theories suggest relationships between specific dimensions of workplace and learning. The theories most relevant to this discussion view learning and environment as multidimensional concepts. This in turn allows us to consider the types of environment that allows the researcher/teacher to learn, and the conditions under which learning can be promoted

An analysis of these literature, suggests that there are 5 distinct themes relating to adult learners. (Brookfield, 1991; Merriam & Caffarelle,1991, Jarvis, 1996)

- All agree that adults learn and have the potential to learn, throughout their lives.
- Adult learning may occur across settings and circumstances (Marsick and Watkins, 1990)
- Adult learners enter learning situations with prior knowledge, beliefs and skills (Knowles 1984) and these may affect their learning (Moll 1990)
- Adult learners are problem oriented, and learning occurs when the problem is related in a meaningful way to the adults life situation. This refers to conflict situations. What Jarvis (1987) refers to as the impetus for learning coming from conflict between personal "biography" and current experience.This suggests that learning will not take place unless a problem implicates routine practice or taken-for-granted knowledge.
- Adults can play a very active role in their own learning. Adults, Knowles (1984) suggests are also pro active and self directed in searching for new learning opportunities.

If adults are capable of learning in this way, consideration must be given to the type of learning that should be promoted to researcher/teacher. Rice (1992, p.73) suggests that teaching should be re-established as a valued form of scholarship. "The scholarship of teaching has a distinctive synoptic

capacity, that is the ability to draw the strands of a field together in a way that provides both coherence and meaning, to place what is known in context and open the way for connections to be made between knower and the known". In this way the researcher/teacher draws on data, ideas or theories taken from the research project and presents them in a coherent and meaningful way to both themselves and their students. Such a view has been substantiated by Glew (1992) who showed that research can transform the teaching/learning experience, reflecting the contribution research can make to teaching and learning. But what of the contribution teaching has to make to research and learning? The literature suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between research and teaching, (Garnett, 1995, Elton, 1995), in that it creates an environment in which the researcher has to plan the presentation of the research in a simple and coherent way for the purpose of teaching. The literature also suggests that this helps expose weakness in the research through the delivery of the material, and therefore requires the researcher/teacher to modify their presentation. This is good practice if the researcher understands the process of teaching and learning that s/he has been involved in. Improved teaching and learning will only occur if the researcher has the knowledge and skills to reflect on those processes and change accordingly. Then the quality of the teaching will truly improve.

If teaching is to be valued in this way, there needs to be a relationship between professional development, learning and the scholarship of teaching, or as Boyatzis, et.al. (1995) suggest the scholarship of learning. However, there is a problem here, in that assessment has centred around the quality of learning, with no prescriptive model of good teaching being offered to ensure quality of learning. Teaching in this context has been taken to cover a range of activities that involve the learner either passively or actively in some form activity, on the assumption that learning will be associated with that activity. The connection between the 'teaching' and the learner is often not understood by the researcher/teacher. What is required is for academics to understand the teaching and learning process. Is this the connection between professional development and learning? After all, researcher/teachers, through the university process aim to help students learn by changing the way they think. Is it not then reasonable to expect the researcher/teacher to be well versed in the same process, i.e. changing the way they think about the teaching/learning process. I would argue that development of this kind, is a powerful route to professional learning.

Concluding comments

This paper has attempted to make connections between professional development, lifelong learning and the position of the professional within it, in this case the researcher/teacher within higher education. The connections that have been made are used o as a means of demonstrating how the development of the teacher and teaching skills rely on professional development, but cannot occur without learning and understanding. That is the understanding of both pedagogic and knowledge based issues. The argument concentrated on the assumption "that improving individual teachers will improve higher education, and thereby student's learning". The paper has argued that this assumption needs to be reconsidered and reconceptualised within the context of adult education, lifelong learning and teaching. Increasingly adult learners are being taught at a distance or through methodologies that are not always within the teaching strategies of practising researchers, therefore as teachers they have to learn too. As such, a clear but pragmatic distinction and connection between professional development and lifelong learning has been suggested .

With the growing significance and importance of the inter-relationship between teaching, learning and research, it is necessary for those involved in teaching in higher education to start thinking about teaching and research as being complementary forms of scholarship. For this to occur, I have argued that professional development has a strong part to play. It should enable researcher/teachers to learn about the teaching process as well as develop their own strategies for teaching, based on understanding related to the scholarship of teaching. This then places the role of professional development firmly in the framework of lifelong learning, but at the same time draws a distinction between them. In the realms of higher education the status of teaching, both as a professional activity and as a sphere of research, must be raised. This will then highlight and facilitate discussions related to the relationship between teaching, learning and research. One of the most crucial questions needing to be addressed now is "How can teaching help develop research and improve the quality of

learning?" Elton's (1977, 2) statement after the twelfth annual conference of the Society for Research into Higher Education on the topic of professional development is still valid and possibly even more pertinent today: 'One is left with the impression that staff development in higher education is many faceted and that it is still looking for a sense of direction'. With the prospect of teacher training being introduced into higher education, now is the time to explore the relationship between teaching, learning, research, professional development and the notion of lifelong learning.

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Researching Learning: A United Kingdom/Singapore comparison.

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This paper is a discussion of an exploratory comparative study of students in the United Kingdom and Singapore who are enrolled on a part-time distance learning Master of Education Degree in Training and Development (MTD). It compares their experiences on the course, the social, cultural and economic impacts on their studies and outlines their different approaches to learning and teaching expectations, linking these with the role of the tutor.

Course background

The MEd in Training and Development attracts a number of international students and is offered currently from three bases: United Kingdom, Eire and Singapore. Students on the course are usually graduates or have a professional qualification, and are either experienced employees or consultants in the training and development field. The course is a distance learning paper-based course with regular intensive seminar weekends which are residential in the UK and Eire, but not in Singapore, largely due to the small geographical size of the country. Designated tutors are responsible for groups of no more than ten students from the start of their studies through to the submission of the Master's dissertation. The taught part of the course consists of four modules with a written assignment, successful completion of which leads to a post-graduate diploma. This is then followed by a research-based dissertation, leading to a Master's Degree.

The course emphasises the desirability of self-directed learning, and it would seem at first sight that a distance learning course, with interactive written materials, virtually dispenses with the need for a tutor, particularly where students are from a professional training and development background. Of course this depends upon how one defines the role of the tutor and the difference between teaching and tutoring, particularly of adults.

Pedagogy vs Andragogy

Knowles (1996) maintains that most of what we know about learning has come from studying children and animals. This has been termed 'pedagogy', which literally translated means 'leading the child', but has come to mean the art and science of teaching the child. This approach, he maintains, ignores the wealth of experience which adults bring to their learning. He developed the term 'andragogy' - the art and science of teaching adults, since he felt that our approach to teaching adults should be substantially different from that of teaching children. Adults, he maintains, bring substantially more experience to the learning arena than children.

> These differences in experience between children and adults have at least three consequences for learning:
> - Adults have more to contribute to the learning of others; for most kinds of learning, they are themselves a rich resource for learning;
> - Adults have a richer foundation of experience to which to relate new experiences (and new learnings tend to take on meaning as we are able to relate them to our past experience);
> - Adults have acquired a larger number of fixed habits and patterns of thought, and therefore tend to be less open-minded.
>
> (Knowles, 1996:89-90)

Andragogy is a distinct shift away from 'teaching' to participatory learning in groups, drawing on adult experiences as a resource. This has implications for the teacher/trainer in that it is necessary to create an environment in which the adult feels safe to perform, recognising the insecurity of adults in being expected to contribute and participate, rather than being told 'the right answer'. We also need to

recognise that there are many learners who may have to 'unlearn' some expectations and learned behaviour from childhood when experiences may have been negative.

Adult needs from education are also different in that there is more immediacy and perceived (or expected) relevance to their everyday lives than there is with children, whether their education is voluntary or enforced by a training programme at work. This is particularly relevant to students on the MEd in Training and Development since they are all either employees involved in training and development or are consultants in the field.

Adult students

Many adults who return to education face a number of difficulties which may impact on their learning. The considerable the research which has been carried out in this area has been carried out with students who return to learning in a conventional setting, has revealed that some adults, be it on full-time or part-time, vocational or non-vocational, academic or practical courses, do experience considerable difficulties for a wide variety of reasons when returning to study (See for example Parr 1996, 1991; McGivney 1995, 1993; Edwards 1993; Oglesby 1991, 1989; Adults Learning, special editions in January 1990 and December 1989; Charnley et al 1985; ACACE 1982).

There are common problems faced by both men and women, for example, confidence, finance and the effect on personal relationships. Bryant (1995) describes the situation thus:

> For many adult students the return to further or higher education represents an obstacle course of Grand National proportions. Self-confidence has to be developed, writing skills polished up or acquired, academic language demystified and personal and family relations re-ordered..... For all but the affluent, there is a further obstacle - the Beechers Brook of the course - which is presented by financial and economic survival.
> (Bryant 1995, p270)

In the main, though not exclusively, the research into adult returners to learning has been concerned with adults who had ended their education at the minimum leaving age or soon after and had returned to learning after a number of years out of the system. One would expect perhaps that students enrolled on a post-graduate course, who already have a degree and/or a professional qualification, are in paid employment and whose occupation is concerned with training and development would not face such difficulties. Since my own area of research is in this field, I was curious, when I became involved with the Master's in Training and Development, to discover whether this was the case.

The research

I embarked on some exploratory research in June 1997 with a group of UK-based students who had begun the course in January of that year. This consisted of a brief questionnaire, asking for both quantitative and qualitative data. Thirty questionnaires were sent out and twenty two returned - a response rate of 73per cent. A few months later, I used the same questionnaire with a group of students on the same course in Singapore. Of fifteen questionnaires handed out, nine were returned - a response rate of 60per cent.. It is interesting to note though that in general, the responses to the questionnaire were much shorter from the Singapore students than from the UK group. There could be all sorts of reasons for this which may raise questions about the validity of comparing results from different cultural groups using a self-completed questionnaire. I have not done a rigorous statistical analysis of the responses, since I am much more interested in the students' experiences, nevertheless, the data does provide some useful pointers towards further research.

I have also been present at and largely responsible for, all residentials/intensive seminars which these groups of students have attended, so I have done a considerable amount of participant observation. What follows is a discussion of some of the issues raised by the students and a comparison of the two countries.

Finance

The majority of students in the UK were fully financed by their organisation, with some partly-funded. Sometimes there were conditions attached to the funding, usually in the form of payback should they leave. Many students received extra support such as time off to study and for residentials, travel expenses, cost of books, access to facilities for research and so on. Where this is in the form of books or a book allowance, it can make a considerable difference between students on a distance learning course with limited, or no, close access to an academic library. From two UK students:

(I have) difficulty in obtaining extra reading materials - our nearest large reference library is fifteen miles away

Access to book (especially older ones) is sometimes as much a challenge as understanding them!

Some students received no extra support and this clearly causes some inequity between students on the same course

The situation is Singapore is rather different, with only one student being sponsored by his organisation and one part-funded; this part-funded student being bonded to the company for three years. The lack of sponsorship from Singaporean organisations plus the problem of access to academic library facilities does cause financial hardship to Singaporean students, and may well be a factor in the lower recruitment figures in this country in comparison with the UK and Eire. Two Singaporean students commented:

Have difficulty paying for the modules due to current economic slowdown

Reduce course fees so that there will be more students to join in, as many of us sponsor ourselves

If students also then have to pay for books and research materials, this creates an added financial burden, or limits the range of material on which students can call in order to complete their studies, particularly at the dissertation stage.

Academic and practical difficulties

The questionnaire asked about any academic or practical difficulties in studying on the course. One does impinge on the other, and there was some overlap in reporting here. Nevertheless, a general picture did emerge.

Practical difficulties

The major practical difficulty reported by most students was the difficulty of time management. There was very little difference between the two groups in their answers. The UK students:

Practical problems are the balance of studying and working combined with research

Distance between self and Sheffield and other students

Balancing pressures of course and work

Taking annual leave to complete assignments

and the Singapore students

Unlike full-time students, the luxury of studying and preparing assignments is not there, as we have family, work and also social commitments.

Getting and staying organised on this course is the greatest challenge

Time management - juggling demands.

What is most noticeable in the section on practical difficulties however, is the difference in reporting by male and female students of their balancing act between work, home and study, which was mentioned to varying degrees by the majority of women in the UK but by only two men. Added pressure was caused by the attendance requirement at residentials/intensive seminars which run from Friday to Sunday. The following two quotes are from a number of comments from female students:

Time - I would like to spend more time but you have to compromise to cover work/study/home commitments

When work and family pressures mount, study becomes of low priority

Only two women students in Singapore mentioned family commitments, although I know from conversations with them that this is a factor in their time juggling.. One can speculate on a number of reasons for this and clearly it is an area where more in-depth research would be useful.

Academic difficulties

Despite the majority of students having a first degree and/or a professional qualification, most problems of an academic nature were concerned with returning to study particularly at postgraduate level; the particular nature of distance learning, that is, the self-discipline needed to do the work; access to library resources or weekly person to person contact with the tutor or other students. From the UK students:

Getting back into the swim of writing to an academic format and learning the discipline to know when to stop reading and get on with the task!

Studying at this level is demanding and initially I doubted my ability, I still do at times, but feel the tutorials and residentials help

Putting words down and rewriting

Not having others living nearby to 'brainstorm' with - although fellow students are only a telephone call away (this is not always the same)

Keeping up the motivation and knowing what is really expected of you at this level

and from the Singapore students:

Not sure how to deal quickly with writer's block

Understanding the literature

Writing the assignments

The (lack of) opportunity to meet both students and tutors. We have to find time in study group to meet without the advantage of a tutor

I must learn to work independently, doing my own reading etc.

The distance from Sheffield

Distance from Sheffield was seen as both an academic and a practical problem. Even for UK students it is difficult to use the available academic resources when one lives or works some distance away. It is also seen as a travel problem when wanting to sort out particular issues with the University, and for attending the residentials which are held in Sheffield. For Singapore students, the distance is much greater and more keenly felt. Telephone contact with the University and with their tutors, who are

Sheffield-based, is virtually precluded on the grounds of cost, though e-mail is seen as a vital communication link.

It is interesting that many students mentioned the lack of contact with their tutor and other students as a problem, despite the fact that they often said that they had chosen a distance learning course for its convenient format and lack of necessity to attend frequent lectures/seminars. Although not originally built into the course structure, mid-module tutorials were recently introduced for UK students. These are seen as important and useful discussion forums for the students, though the geographical dispersion of the student groups does mean that there are some complaints about travel!! These tutorials are not possible for Singapore students because of the distance involved. However, an e-mail network discussion forum was established for the 1997 intake, with the Singapore course co-ordinator acting as intermediary for two students without an e-mail facility. The 1998 intake all had e-mail when they started, and have actually made much more use of their forum facility as a means of contact. Tutors are also included in the discussion list, and are often 'called in' during the course of exchanges.

The tutor role

The tutors are seen as central to the course by both the course team and the students and perform a number of support functions.

Rather than the tutor being a 'disseminator of wisdom' and controller of information, as has been suggested with a pedagogical approach, tutors are facilitators and supporters of learners, consolidating, clarifying ad explaining the course material as necessary and are seen as pivotal to the students' success. Although no research has been conducted on this particular course, Burt (1997: 10), in research for The Open University, maintains that tutorials and assignment consolidation and feedback, were rated highly by students in a list of 26 components for helpfulness, with students attending tutorials gaining higher marks in assessment (Burt, p36).

There is a considerable element of teaching in the feedback given on each assignment, in which not only are good points reinforced, but the student is also made aware of how the assignment could be made better. Study skills are built in here as well as at the intensive seminars.

Tutors are also centrally involved in residentials/intensive seminars. They are involved in the programme planning and the implementation of the activities which are intended to consolidate the course material. They are available to all students during the whole period and specific tutorial slots are built into the programme.

The students are told that the tutors' role is to give support in handling and organising material to produce the evaluative and critically analytical writing required at Master's level, not to act as extensions to the units themselves.

To some extent, tutors are also involved in the pastoral care of their students, inasmuch as it impacts on their studies. MTD tutors in the UK are perhaps more involved in this than in Singapore, where because of her proximity to the students the course co-ordinator becomes aware of problems more quickly and can deal with them or pass them through to the tutor. It is important therefore to be aware of the difficulties which may be present for students, even if they are not verbalised directly. The research on which this paper is based is a start.

Whilst the tutor role is seen as very important by all students studying on the MEd in Training and Development, there are considerable cultural differences in the expectations of the two groups. Whereas students in the UK are more accepting of a facilitating tutor role, many students in Singapore have much greater expectation of a more didactic approach, both from their tutor and from the intensive seminars. There is considerable pressure on the visiting course team in Singapore, both directly and indirectly, to give straight lectures, and we have to emphasise considerably that students

have chosen to study at a distance, with the delivery of the course materials being in the paper-based modules.

The United Kingdom students see the seminars as an opportunity to clarify and discuss the course material, drawing on the expertise of all the tutors present, and recognising that the interactive nature of the exercises is designed to consolidate and expand their learning. They are critical and often challenging, willing to participate and discuss the issues, teasing out the less obvious connections with their course and their professional practice.

Basically the same programme of seminars is used for the Singaporean students, but their responses are somewhat different. They participate in the activities and work well on drawing out the learning links between the activities and the course material. When asked general questions though, they are somewhat reticent in answering. They are much more animated when discussing in groups and are often very competitive in their desire to give the best group feedback.

At the end of the students' first three-day seminar in Singapore in 1997, the evaluation sheets appeared to be reasonably positive, and the students departed with smiles and thanks. That was not the end of it though! There was verbal feedback from the students via the course co-ordinator in Singapore, a graduate of the course who has close connections with the students. Firstly they wanted greater tutor input on course material, with straight lecturing sessions during the seminar period. And secondly, there was an expectation that tutors would be experts in all areas of the curriculum.

Cultural differences

This is reflective of three things: the much more didactic approach to education in South East Asian cultures. Although this is slowly changing, and there is a move to more student-centred learning, it is still influential in educational thinking. Secondly, there is a considerable respect in Asian cultures for 'elders and betters' which leads students to want to hear pearls of wisdom from course lecturers and tutors. This also leads them to be relatively uncritical of anything which is said or written by anyone construed to be an expert in a particular area. Linking with this point is the Asian culture of 'giving face'. One aspect of this is that there will be no direct challenge, questioning or criticism of anyone in authority - hence the students would not come to me directly with their requests, because it implies they are criticising the provision. Another aspect is that 'giving face' also means that students are unwilling to volunteer information as individuals, since this may show other students as less able by comparison. Hence the varying responses in the seminars which I discussed earlier.

I reflected considerably on this issues both in terms of my response to the students, and in the way in which the seminars are structured. My learning here I decided needed considerably more research, but it would certainly inform teaching practice. Clearly cultural issues need to be addressed not only in relation to course content, but also in enabling students to meet the assessment requirements of a postgraduate course where critical analysis of literature is required.

Concluding comments

For me, there are clear links between research, learning and teaching, and I have always seen this as important for anyone in teaching or lecturing. However, when I became a full-time university lecturer, I became aware that whilst this type of research is beneficial for courses, lecturers and students, it is not highly regarded. At the very least it needs to be published, and even better would be to attract external funds for a major piece of research, both of which would enhance performance for the Research Assessment Exercise. This I think is very sad, since both are valuable and should be given due credit.

This particular piece of research has highlighted the importance of the tutor role in a distance learning course which emphasises self-directed learning. The tutors on the course are experts in some parts of it, have written course units and been instrumental in shaping the structure and direction of the course. Their role in relation to the students however, is primarily facilitative and supportive, which

fits closely with the andragogical approach which I feel should be taken in the education of adults and in my view enhances their professional standing as tutors.

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Research, Teaching and Learning: Seeking Connections

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> Recall the problem of education. Educational programs, educational methods, educational goals and educational personnel are involved today in a far-reaching crisis. Educational authorities and those responsible for socialisation (family, schools university but also institutions and business) and likewise educational personnel (father, mother, teacher, education instructor) find that they are exposed to harsh criticism and impatient accusations from right and left; for some they are too conservative, for others too progressive; for some too political, for others too unpolitical; for some too authoritarian, for others too anti-authoritarian. Perplexity and disorientation are widespread.
> Kung (1974) 598

Foreword

In an age of outcomes, assessment and financial justifications, is research, teaching and learning (RTL) an acceptable trinity in the new faith of managers and accountants? Is such a discussion part of a serious game that will appeal to the holders of the purse-strings? Is the game being played for their benefit anyway?

The answers to the above three questions are probably yes, no, no. Are outcomes or benefit to be perceived in economic, political, social or personal terms? Do such outcomes supply a justification to others by which they judge suitabilities or appropriateness?

Finally, why so many questions? We tread on hallowed ground. Hitherto accepted positions are being re-considered. Self-development is increasingly possible using modern technology, an education that has supervisors, advisors, or counsellors, but not teachers supplying knowledge or criticisms and analyses of written material. It is the teaching role that becomes dispensable, leaving a learner to struggle with limited support in unfamiliar waters. Such practice assumes a learner well-equipped to undertake the learning adventure solo. Motivation is all, with incentives of some kind as enticement.

Introduction

Education has always justified itself for some in its own terms as an obvious good (but less good if it becomes expensive to others - a barometer effect: as cost rises, support declines or perceived improvement is required).

Memories of the Past

> That the number of our members be unlimited' declared the London Corresponding Society in 1792.
> Thompson (1968,9)

> The growth of education provided after 1830 brought further twists....First, you were excluded from learning by the absence of resources or household conditions. Then, once available, the preferred knowledge turned out to be wildly inappropriate. Far from promising liberation, this knowledge threatened subjection ....At worst it added to the long list, yet another kind of tyranny.
> Johnson (1993,20)

This tyranny was defined by Cobbett as

> there to teach those children, along with reading, all those notions which are calculated to make them content in a state of slavery.
> Johnson (1993,21)

> From now on it was to be almost impossible for a country lacking both mass education and adequate higher educational institutions to become a modern economy.
> Hobsbawm (1962, 42)

> 'The nation' was the new civic religion of states. It provided a cement which bonded all citizens to their state, and a counterweight to all those who appealed to other loyalties over state loyalty - to religion, to nationality or ethnicity not identified with the state, perhaps above all to class.
> Hobsbawm (1987, 149)

Justifications or purposes of education lie behind these, though not a common thread or observation. Probably not a common definition, either, except possibly an agreement that it is functional, the debate being what the function is.

Across the education system, the purpose, civic, social or economic, can be first knowledge-dispensing, but working towards greater initial assessment as the learner grows older in school, to become more engaged but less biddable in post-compulsory institutions.

Indeed, most discussion on learning focuses on the learner, the student, not the teacher and their function.

Knowledge-dispensing on the one side offers knowledge-extending on the other, but increasingly initial assessment is called for. Is discussion and debate between teacher and learner, the area of engagement where these faculties will be brought out?

'Knowledge is Power' proclaims the WEA.

'Live and Learn' says the OU both perceived goods.

But recently times have changed to seek justification against cost, an economic incentive.

'Education is the best economic policy we have', says Tony Blair, (cm 3790 1998 9), with no underlying assumptions spelled out.

The National Committee chaired by Lord Dearing was also heavily influenced by economic considerations.

> The purpose of education is life enhancing: it contributes to the whole quality of life. So, to be a successful nation in a competitive world, and to maintain a cohesive society and a rich culture, we must invest in education to develop our greatest resource our people.
> (National Committee (1997)7, para 1.1)

Currently, the stimulus for expansion in higher education, with appropriate qualitative improvement across the whole system is economic. That is the thread that seems to run through aspects of RTL complete with attempts at outcomes assessment, added value measures and cost effectiveness. It is an aspect of Government policy. Shades of academia are opening wide to surveyors who measure, to auditors with calculators.

RTL - a genuine trinity?

> Education is not put on like vanish. It springs like a plant from the soil, and the fragrance of the earth is upon it. (R H Tawney, quoted by (Fryer (1997)) 56)

With education functioning economically and socially, RTL functions within that, the connection being into teaching and learning, and into research, to judge results - whether by league tables or any

other form of 'impartial' measurement - that can be broadly applied. 'On its own merits' or even 'in its own terms' is not an option. The market to trade and sell dilutes into pre-determined categories. Personal philosophy and outlook is similarly drawn into this, and appreciated or otherwise by externally applied criteria. This despite the fact that, of its nature, learning is a personal experience, and potentially unique to each person in its effects.

In a period where templates, systems and patterns are applied, not always sensitively but often in a belief that they fit or can be made to fit any situation, Raymond Williams commented.

> Masses are other people ..... There are in fact no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses.
> McIlroy (1993) 5, who adds
>
> This suggested the distortion of vision and humanity such formulaic seeing entails and the utility, in breaking this sterile, routine thinking, of applying the formula to include oneself.

Learning

Launching into a conspectus of adult learning, Mark Tennant notes:

> two persistent problems .... The first is that there are insurmountable methodological difficulties in establishing 'phases' or 'stages' of adult life. The second is that much of the literature is historically and socially rooted and lacks any worthwhile generalizability.
> Tennant (1993) 122

Further, in writing of recurrent education,

> an under lying value is a humanistic concern for the individual. The idea of self-development, which is based on notions of individuality and growth, is contrasted with the opposing notions of enhancement, alienation and stagnation.
> Tennant (1993) 122

David Kolb, writing on the process of experiential learning, finally feels obliged to offer his own definition of learning:

> *learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*. This definition emphasises several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective. First is the emphasis on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes. Second is that knowledge is a transformation process, being continously created and recreated, not an independent entity to be acquired or transmitted. Third, learning transforms experience in both objective and subjective forms. Finally, to understand learning, we must understand the nature of knowledge, and vice versa.
> Kolb (1993) 155

An enigmatic final statement. Is it the nature of knowledge, its understanding or how it is presented that is the vital element? Facts are not straight forward, it is their interpretation, perhaps their presentation that infringe their neutrality . A political issue for the teacher, the purveyor of knowledge, who may not recognise their vulnerability in what they see as non-controversial subject matter. Love and enthusiasm for the subject will be conveyed by osmosis, a percolation of personality to a sympathetic audience, an empathetic connection. Strengthened where there is an initial interest in the subject or topic, as is more likely where adults are learning, since they usually have a choice denied to those in the compulsory sector of education.

Teaching and learning, a common pursuit for both teacher and learner in areas or on topics of common concern. The potential creativity of the relationship vulnerable to clashes of personality, disappointment of the learner where the teacher's approach or presentation fails to trigger excitement or enthusiasm in the subject or, perhaps, in some areas, fail to relate to students' life experience. An

exchange, one has always supposed, improved by greater knowledge of the subject, thus of recent research, and ultimately of research itself. Research that might impinge on perceived understandings and interpretations of hitherto uncontentious accepted theory or knowledge.

Learning is certainly a key word for the present government. In the current cascade of prescriptive and assertively stated material from DfEE and others, the word is used repeatedly, but not defined. We have lifelong learning, a learning society, a culture of learning, a University for Industry forthcoming which is 'engaging people in learning for life,' the word is used far and wide in many contexts for official policy purposes : to develop learning opportunities, increase the availability and flexibility of learning, and removing financial barriers to learning.

Learning has become part of a Government policy framework which embraces training and vocational provision, higher education, and an attitude or outlook generated by economic change, and pressure to come to terms with it.

> The Government is committed to the establishment of a learning society in which all people have opportunities to succeed. Increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression are fundamental to the Government's strategy. These are the keys to social cohesion and economic success.
> (The Learning Age (1998a) 7)

The connections here are across society and within institutions. Learning is a commendable good, a given to which the individual is prompted to aspire within a predicted society of frequent job-changing, retraining, and with a network of ladders to climb for economic success.

Research

Where or what is the role of research in this? Working from the individual to the national or strategic, from the purpose of research - an expansion of knowledge for that individual and as a contribution from that individual to society, and on to the role of research in that society as a policy issue. Driven to functionalism yet again.

Dearing, concerning research, was very straight forward, in his assumptions over research and its role in higher education where:

> we have identified four distinct purposes:
> - to add to the sum of human knowledge and understanding;
> - to reform and enhance teaching;
> - to generate useful knowledge and inventions in support of wealth creation and an improved quality of life;
> - to create an environment in which researchers can be encouraged, and given a high level of training.
>
> National Committee Summary Report (1997) 21, para 52

The Government response to this and related recommendations (29-35, 52 and 72) was to give general support.

> The Government is committed to maintaining a world class science base. It recognises the strains on the dual support system and has provided extra funding to enable universities to make a start on meeting urgent infrastructure and equipment needs for teaching and research in 1998-99. The position for future years is being considered in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
> The Learning Age (1998b)) 28.

Dearing (recommendation 34) suggested that:

> the next Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is amended to encourage institutions to make strategic decisions about whether to enter departments for the exercise or whether to seek a lower level of non-competitive funding to support research and scholarship which underpins teaching.
> National Committee Summary Report (1997) 46

Clearly no problem here in seeing research as a significant part of teaching, presumably enhancing quality of content. Government acquiesced, and, on the background of a current HE funding bodies' consultation on the 'purposes, principles and scope' of the RAE, stated it

> would like to see *a process* for assessing the quality of research which enhances quality and innovation.
> The Learning Age (1998b)) 29, para 5.3

And yet ...

> Education ministers have made clear their concern that academics' preoccupation with research - particularly the scramble for high research ratings and grants through the Research Assessment Exercise - has led to a neglect of teaching duties.
> Lee Elliot Major, The Guardian Higher Education Supplement, April 14, 1998 p.1.

So one initiative can have unforeseen effects .

'The process' which might have offered an educational or official view of a link between research and teaching, came down, provisionally, to being

> open to a greater number of influences than peer review, drawing on research expertise from outside UK universities where this is appropriate and can be done in a cost effective way.
> The Learning Age(1998b)) 29, para 5.3.

In short, the current cavalcade of the use of the word, 'learning', in whatever context, is seen, by Government, as clear and uncontentious in meaning. Driven by its economic motor, it endorses Dearing's view that

> there is scope for much greater use by industry of the research capabilities to be found in higher education.
> The Learning Age (1998b)) 30, para 5.5.

The perspective shift in higher education, not an agent of change, but an agency for adapting to economically-induced change, and a society increasingly influenced by new technology. We are led back again to functionalism.

The ambiguity of the discussion emerges as: RTL taken for granted within a substantial element of Government policy, though understood as making three separate contributions from its three parts. On the other side, no definitional base on which to build and carry forward the policy commitment, except by outside or external influences, probably of a management kind which would have the responsibility for carrying through and extending structures and frameworks.

Today's Context

As this is written outcomes of the discussion generated by the arrival of a new Government with the power (if not the money) to deliver, and the debate following the reports and enquiries of Dearing, Kennedy and Fryer, and the studies carried out by them, plus political party policy documents and other publications, mainly Government, but from interested groups, has prompted initiatives, from a

'National Grid for Learning' to a 'University for Industry'. Ambition is strong, with rapid if not urgent progress sought.

> Deadlines given run from 1998 to 2002, when most educational institutions and libraries will be connected to the Grid 'enabling perhaps 75% of teachers and 50% of pupils and students to use their own e-mail addresses by then'.
> Connecting the Learning Society (1997) 11

The University for Industry has similarly wide aims.

> By 2002, we expect that 2.5 million people or businesses a year will be using the Ufl's range of information services and over 600,000 a year will be pursuing programmes of learning organised through the Ufl. To get the Ufl started, the Government is investing £15m in 1998-99.
> The Learning Age (1998 c)) 5

Clearly, both are major initiatives, which could transform the context of any education discussion, especially if economically or employment related.

Going forward on a platform of assumptions that see RTL having functional roles, and success judged on those bases, presumably leads to a prosperous post-industrial society. The assumptions, economy- and employment-related, lead through to a heavier emphasis on the vocational provision and sector.

This is not at the expense of recognising an RTL contribution to personal development. David Blunkett in his forewords to recent DfEE responses to Dearing and Kennedy, stresses the economic - 'Learning is the key to prosperity. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century'. But also 'we value learning for its own sake' The Learning Age (1998) 7. and recognise a contribution also by suitable measures for 'social cohesion' The Learning Age (1998a)) 1.

Will these prospects of massive increases in participation be fulfilled by a population frequently criticised for its lack of interest in education and training.

The recently available National Adult Learning Survey, 1997, indicates optimism. So far as one comment can cover such a vast researched report,

> The NALS estimate of the proportion of the population involved in learning was higher than estimates from two recent surveys on the same subject. It was concluded that this probably arose because NALS succeeded in tapping a broader range of learning experiences than did the previous surveys.
> Beinant and Smith(1998) 13

Reflections

Whether there are also international influences at work is uncertain, but lifelong learning is part of a wide movement, in which RTL is to play its part.

> There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education ....It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.
> Delors (1996) The Treasure Within quoted in Fryer (1997) cover.

Twenty-six years ago, Edgar Faure called for 'a vision of the whole' of education. 'We must think clearly in exploring new paths for the future.' Faure (1972) 175-6

The focus here is an individual within a democracy to which education is a main contribution:

> .... democratic education must become a preparation for the real exercise of democracy .... Profound changes are taking place in public life and work but also in the daily lives of more and more men and women ... People are plagued by doubt and scepticism, by the decay in time honoured values, the latent threat of nuclear cataclysm and all it could lead to.... The emotional content and security derived from family and community life are losing their importance and being replaced by impersonal relationships in a factory, an administration or a plantation... A new alienation within consumer society may accordingly be added to the individual's traditional alienation within his work.
> Faure (1972)102-3

This is a depressing scenario, familiar in Britain until recently. It illustrates the apathy and scepticism that faces the present Government initiatives, just as it challenges RTL as an instrument to change or reform that situation.

This paper has moved from a wide beginning to a much narrower consideration of RTL within current Government policy. The Government commitment and activity is undoubted, but, though wishing to improve RTL in its separate parts, within policies of substantial change, there are no clear definitions offered for RTL. Thus Dearing proposes (Recommendation 14) an Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education with functions including the commissioning of research and development in learning and teaching practices, spelt out in Recommendation 15. Dearing tends to list functions, the Government to respond in kind. It is standards - as well as economically - motivated.

Can those invited to participate as researchers, teachers or learners respond?

> We seem to be engaged less in necessary radical reform than in that bustling, flustered *reformism* which in various spheres of life (university, industry, church, education, state legislation) has produced a great deal of change and little improvement.
> Kung (1974), 55.

This is the challenge to RTL: to produce improvement at a time of instability and forever changing circumstances.

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Collaborative research: a disturbing practice

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> They (universities) will have to become more open, porous institutions vis-a-vis the wider community, with fewer gates and more revolving doors'. The more open, flexible structures of research had implications for questions such as how the knowledge was produced, balanced against its traditional place in the disciplines, absorbed into curriculum, codified and transmitted....
> ('Changing face of research' by Guy Healy in Higher Education supplement in *The Australian* newspaper 24 September 1997)

Collaborative partnerships between government, industry and universities are seen to be a critical part of the technology for increasing the knowledge and skills of the workforce in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. This alliance has had a profound impact on universities as they engage in an entrepreneurial multi-disciplinary knowledge production. Such partnerships are not unproblematic and this paper addresses the general thematic of the problems and prospects for the university opened up by new forms of research.

The main focus of this paper is on the complexities of academics 'doing' collaborative research. It is a reflexive commentary on my participation in a specific commissioned workplace research project as a typical site of such collaboration. This commentary brings to the surface a range of methodological, political and epistemological tensions in commissioned research in the contemporary world with pressure on academics to produce particular kinds of knowledge. (Stronarch and MacLure 1997: 101) Collaborative research can be disturbing for academics but it can also be understood as a site for disturbing what others might see as inevitable closures.

The paper begins by positioning the commentary within the current economic, political and social context. This is followed by an analysis of the textual practices of the research project. The analysis itself was a collaborative one (with co-researcher, H. Scheeres) revealing a shift in an understanding of ourselves as researchers as we struggled from a position of compliance to one of productive disruption. In the conclusion of this paper, this productive disruption position is explored further as a way of opening up methodological possibilities in collaborative research.

The work under analysis in this paper is located in Australia yet many of the experiences and issues are global ones, as most industrial and industrialising countries engage in similar economic and education reforms. Fuelled by the dominance of economic goals that tie together production and performativity, workplaces have become a common site of research interest of government, industry and education. But with such partnerships a number of dilemmas surface. These relate to the tensions around the different histories and positions of the participants, as well as the ambiguous seductions offered in such partnerships.

Academics' participation in commissioned workplace research can in part be understood as part of the blurring 'distinction between educational and non-educational discourses and practices' (Usher 1997: 110). Educators, in contemporary universities, are not neutral disinterested seekers of workplace knowledge. Educational institutions, like their research sites, are workplaces. Academics in universities are not simply sociological observers of the effects of economic rationalism on contemporary workplaces and work practices. They are in business — in this case business that involves the commodification and marketisation of education. While on the one hand they might analyse or even struggle with the colonisation of education by managerial discourse, on the other hand they too are in the marketplace. Their 'business' needs more markets in order to be successful in the increasingly competitive global market.

Winning commissioned research contracts has its financial rewards - in the first instance in terms of enabling the employment of academic staff but also in terms of the funding formulas in higher education, where a competitive index is used to distribute research funding. Furthermore academics have been involved in the construction of the workplace as a new site of 'learning' and therefore a potential recruiting ground for students. Thus the seduction of the (potential) financial rewards in commissioned research illustrate the inseparability of workplace reforms, research and educational practice.

Academic compliance with government agendas suggests the consideration of two contrasting positions. The first is the strategic optimism argument which suggests that academic strategic intervention will make a difference. This position argues openings in the new alliance must be exploited in order to intervene and thus influence the products to less performative ends. (Luke 1995) The second position is the critique from the Left that accuses academics engaged in commissioned research of 'selling out'. Resistance, it is argued, in the form of non-participation, is needed to subvert the agenda.

This second position fails to acknowledge the ambiguities and complexities that pull together academics, government and industry into the same activities. On the other hand the first position, the strategic intervention one, does offer a useful point of consideration — useful in relation to developing research tools for intervening in a way that unsettles the otherwise unproblematised realisation of economic rationalist goals.

The particular project that this commentary is based on is a Commonwealth Government commissioned one comprising two stages: a research stage investigating the changing culture of work and new work practices in restructuring food industry enterprises; followed by the development of training programs on spoken and written language competencies relevant to communicating in these 'new' workplaces.

This collaborative project exemplifies the intersection of a number of social changes. The first change is to do with the nature of the 'new' work practices in the post Fordist workplace. The contemporary privileging of social relationships at work and the construction of workers as social subjects have foregrounded the role of language at work — 'communication' has a central place in workplace and training discourses. Communication in the workplace now not only encompasses a range of spoken and written language practices but it is seen as the key to 'effective' work practices and thus to productivity increases.

The contemporary interest in communication in workplaces is accompanied by what has become known in contemporary cultural analysis as the 'linguistic turn' (Lemert 1997, du Gay 1996, Poynton 1993). Theorists from a variety of disciplines 'have declared language to bring facts into being and not simply to report on them .... Meaning of any object resides not within that object itself but is a product of how that object is socially constructed through language and representation' (du Gay 96: 42). The interdisciplinary interest in the relationship of language to social and cultural processes and thus to the production of knowledge has opened up interest in language and discourse analysis as methods for studying social change.

The project is located at the intersection of the changes in the contemporary workplace and the privileging of language at work along with an academic interest in using discourse analysis to understand these changes. The conjunction of these changes, coupled with the researchers' own academic training in applied linguistics focusing on a social theory of language, positions the researchers in a particular way. In Fairclough's terms (1992) the research can be seen as part of the 'technologization of discourse' where as institutional agents we consciously intervene in discursive practices in order to bring about change. The research project focused on describing and developing efficient, effective practices of the new workplace and our task was to influence the practices of workplace trainers.

Past compliance: future disruption

The following commentary focuses on two written texts of the food industry research project: the submission (ie., the tender document), and the final report (ie., the text that signals the closure of the research project). The analysis involves a re-examination of our roles as researchers in relation to the seductions and the struggle to explore ways of opening up the research space as a site of contestation. It presents the possibilities of taking up particular positions by recognising that the research methodology is a site of contention.

Conflicting desires regarding outcomes and simple truths implicate methodological questions — for example, how can we unsettle a 'positivist' approach without jeopardising the project or our reputations within the commissioned workplace research space? Can there be two (intersecting) two layers where one layer meets the government agenda and the other speaks to academics? Can we then construct a method for having two layers? I n other words a hybrid methodology which is not a 'rejection of previous methodologies or interpretative frames so much as an acknowledgment of their transgressive "other"'. (Stronach & MacLure 1997: 112)

Would a hybrid methodology enable us to make explicit our interest in knowledge about the social identities of workers and their social practices in 'reconstructing' workplaces given the lack of readiness of workplaces and industry bodies to engage in such complexities? Would we be able to embed the complexities of workplace language and relationships within competency based training modules with their prescriptive boundaries that seemingly preclude the 'openness' of learning about workplace communication?

Our analysis and commentary are selective rather than exhaustive in considering different research moments, where we as researchers reflect on our performativity, as well as on our attempts to disrupt the 'positivist' research process. We see our work so far as a starting point for further exploration and development of alternative research practices.

Submission

The submission, the text that persuades the funding body of our expertise, unproblematically accepts the current economic agenda, by complying with the promise that improving communication skills of workers will increase productivity, that improved communication will result from the development of training programs focusing on the new communication demands. This message is reinforced by the title of one of the subsections, 'How the proposed project would increase worker productivity'.

The description of the research methodology reveals further compliance with the government and industry's desired outcomes. The methodology as reflected in the submission provided a linear procedural description of tasks:

- Collection of data, involving observation and taping of team meetings, consultative committees and training programs, interviews with employees and management, observation of job performance at the operator level
- Collation and analysis of findings
- Identification of oral communication competencies and strategies
- Development of 'Train the Trainer' modules
- Trialing and revision of modules
- Production of modules

This list describes certain kinds of research practices that resonate with a 'positivist' approach where the research emphasises determinacy, rationality, impersonality and prediction, using the natural sciences as the model (Usher 1996: 14-5). This is the perfect match for the required outcome, that is, a rational, linear description of communication skills needed for productive and efficient work and the kind of training that would lead to these outcomes.

Predictably, perhaps, the research methodology conceals the fact that one of our principal research interests was to understand the complexities around construction of workplace knowledge and

practices. There was no suggestion in the methodology of the significance of local site specific factors that might challenge the production of a generic list of oral communication competencies and generic training modules for trainers. Furthermore, our use of a 'positivist' methodology reveals nothing of our own academic position on research which challenges positivist epistemology. Our research paradigm (as practised in unaligned projects) recognises not only that the site of the research is a socio-cultural construct but also that research is itself a socio-cultural practice.

Thus the complexities of the research process itself remained invisible. We presented the accepted model of commissioned research - enter workplace, collect data, analyse data, turn into desired training packages, then do the training (and perhaps evaluation). Implicit in this model is the rejection of anything that would thwart the process and anticipated outcomes. There is also no recognition that the researchers themselves influence the nature of the data collection. Researchers are hired because of their 'technical' expertise but it is this technical expertise that is considered to enable them to identify 'objectively' what it is to be found.

There is however a space which could be opened up here at the submission stage which would disrupt the rational, linear progression which appears so unproblematic. The description of tasks would include contributions by the participants as an integral part of the process, rather than full orchestration by the researchers. This would undoubtedly increase the potential for upsetting the seemingly simple progression of tasks and attendant outcomes. It also means that the unproblematic outcomes, as stated in the submission, should rather allow for a range of possibilities that are likely to emerge during a multiple layered research process.

The final report

There is little evidence in the report of the complexities of the research process or product. The report reveals the way we met the aims of the project, its rationale and its achievements. We succeeded, ie., our research was legitimate on the basis of its efficiency. We established the validity of the outcomes. The report reveals that we 'found' a deficit of language skills in the workforce, we identified what was needed, we then developed and delivered training. Implicit in this is the expectation that increased worker productivity follows. In terms of the performativity principle, we performed well — 'the best possible input/output equation'. (Lyotard 1979)

The report is completed and presented long before any long term outcomes can be assessed. We adopted the common practice of justifying our work by the inclusion of the comments from the participants' evaluation forms collected during the trialing process of the manuals, for example: *We've got to do this right across the site.. It taught us to communicate effectively.*

The report does nevertheless reveal some of the complexities of the introduction and implementation of new management and work practices. A number of issues were raised, calling them 'general tendencies'. Some examples of the tendencies are:

- Meetings still **tend** to be hierarchically based if higher level management is present.
- Men **tend** to take most turns at talk, often do not acknowledge the contribution of other members and often do not allow other members to have their full say.
- Non-English speaking background employees, especially women, **tend** to be disadvantaged in larger workplace meetings.
- Some middle managers **tend** to be threatened by the development of teams in the workplace.
- Employees **tended** to doubt the commitment of managers who remained distant from the shopfloor at a time of great change.

- Team members **tended** to be frustrated by the lack of response to their requests and suggestions which they made as part of a team. .

These tendencies are significant in terms of the way they foreground the continuation of the hierarchical power relations. But interestingly there is a lack of analysis of these in the report. There is an invisible assumption that managerial problems raised by the employees have been addressed (successfully) within the body of the training manuals and that the training program will be a site for raising and addressing them. Yet many go beyond the training possibilities.

Furthermore the absence of any discussion about the difficulties around the genre of the training manuals, its discreteness and its potential impact, raises questions about our compliance through the very writing of the report.

Our compliance with presenting a non-problematic report reveals an additional significant absence. The research process involved investigation of the social and language practices at local specific sites, yet the local knowledge about or issues to do with these practices was invisible. This absence perhaps can be explained in terms of Foucault's notion of disciplinary power exercised through the panoptic gaze (1977). The prescriptive contents of the report became part of the surveillance where the researchers regulated their practices 'automatically' according to 'anonymous' power relations. The panoptic gaze is embodied in discursive practices and the unsaid. These therefore become part of the technology involving the internalising of control and the imposition of 'self-discipline'.

Perhaps the challenge here for researchers lies in a consideration of the following questions. Did the dominant genre through which the final report was written establish the boundaries of what could and could not be articulated? Could we have raised the dilemmas by writing the text in a different way? Could we have presented questions rather than resolutions in the context of the different histories, expectations of our partners in a text that required very particular kinds of meanings?

> Is it possible to use textuality against itself and write in a way which exemplifies openness and multiple meanings but which yet is still about something?
> (Usher 1997: 9)

It is important to note here that 'trialing' of the training manuals was part of the project. This was part of the 'invisible' research phase. Training sessions are a site where workers and their subjectivities and sociocultural locations come to the fore. It was here that some of the tensions and differences in agendas became most apparent.

We do acknowledge that in some ways the training did disturb, if not challenge, the expected performative outcomes. The research did include a substantial amount of ethnographic and linguistic work. The data collected through our interviews and observations did reveal the way power was played out in the workplaces. While we may have felt constrained by the genre of training manuals we did go beyond expectations by providing as part of the activities a number of the transcripts that highlighted the complexities of the power relationships in the workplaces for analysis by both employees and management.

In reflecting on our research practices, the differences between the experience of training sessions and what appeared as written texts in the training manuals were obvious: even though the manuals problematised communication practices in the workplace, the problems were presented as solvable in a linear, rational way - this is the genre of training manuals. The recognition that ideologies and socio-political locations underpin all the new (and old) ways of working is there, but the emphasis is on moving from this to successful ways of operating in the new culture as though the new identities are a set of skills and strategies to be learned.

Conclusion

Government commissioned research with its emphasis on performativity is an exemplary site of the inevitable alliance between research, economics and the state, illustrating the way the spaces of contemporary educational research have been subjected to:

- intensification of research work through shorter contracts
- greater formal control by state and quasi-state bodies
- greater links between policy and research
- funding competition which has led to a research economy where the emphasis is more on competition and status display.

A range of desires and goals will continue to exist in all collaborative workplace research whether the research is commissioned or not. As researchers and educators we need to problematise 'collaborative' research, and question the nature of collaboration and compliance given the potentially opposing interests and goals of the various partners. Workplaces have become important sites for interdisciplinary research and academics are becoming more involved in workplace research. Our involvement relates to a number of complex reasons: firstly our 'academic' interest in theorising the nature of new workplace knowledge and the construction of 'knowledge workers' (Gee 1996) and the implications of this for education and training; and secondly for commercial reasons. Universities are also workplaces and therefore also one of the sites that are part of the contestation around socio-political and educational discourses. We are implicated in and thus participants in the blurring distinctions between business, education and training.

We need to consider ways in which we can participate collaboratively and at the same time use research to extend understandings about the tensions and the contestations around the construction of knowledge. We need to resist surrendering to the need to find simple, accessible and immediately relevant truths and definitions of what counts as success - our challenging of these, has to be visible and needs to be an explicit part of the collaborative initiatives amongst academics, government and industry.

In re-examining this kind of collaborative research one focus might be to develop a different theoretical perspective on what arises from the interviews, observations and training sessions. So, for example instead of seeing the issues and problems of the restructuring workplace practices as disruptions which either interfere with the linear, rational progression towards enlightenment, or texts which provide case studies or scenarios with problems to be examined, discussed and solved, we could reconstruct the issues and problems as disruptions exemplifying the multiplicity of subjectivities and desires of the workers.

Research methodology can build in the disruptions within a theoretical framework of transgressive validity that 'runs counter to the standard **validity** of correspondence: a nonreferential validity interested in how discourse does its work' (Lather 1993: 675) This methodology could then be described as hybrid research (Stronach and MacLure 1997), where modern and postmodern approaches intersect. The contract with its agreed products - texts and training - need not be abrogated, but the outcomes would include the training participants' explorations and disruptions disturbing the prescriptive single outcome.

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Part-time students, tutors and the accredited history curriculum: a case study

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In 1994 the University of Exeter accredited and modularised its part-time liberal adult education. After three years operational experience, the aims of this paper are to consider in general terms the way in which the accreditation of such programmes may affect links between teachers and learners and act as a catalyst for change in the structure and provision of adult education. These issues will be considered in relation to the discipline of history and suggestions will be made on ways in which part-time tutors may approach assessment in a positive and creative manner.

If the experience of Exeter is typical, the major impact of accreditation on university continuing education has meant the demise of the extra mural tutorial tradition. It has been argued that the distinctiveness of such provision and its students has been subsumed into what Fieldhouse has termed a 'modular, part-time mode of lifelong learning within higher education' (Fieldhouse,1996: 395). It might therefore be argued that many tutors and students in continuing education approached accreditation with a sense of foreboding and loss. Tutors foresaw few opportunities to explore their subject together with students as an autonomous group, at their own pace and without the pressures engendered by assessment and quality assurance procedures. Opportunities for students to negotiate their own curriculum would be abandoned in favour of more formal, prescriptive approaches to study; experiences which the many adult learners who already possessed qualifications saw little relevance in repeating.

Three years on, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that students in university continuing education have come to terms with the changes brought about by accreditation although impressionistically, this seems to be the case. For example, Exeter's figures of approximately 45% of its Combined Studies students who achieved credit in 1996/7 reflect favourably on the 40% established by a report on the accreditation of continuing education in the 'old' universities during 1995/6 (Fieldhouse, Butt and Harris: 1997). Changes in the continuing education student body are equally difficult to identify although like Bowls, it might be argued that accreditation helps to widen participation rates from underprivileged students - one of the most cherished traditions of university extra-mural provision (Bowls: 1992). What is very difficult to establish is the number of often well-established and reputable tutors who have either become disaffected by the processes of accreditation and fallen away, as opposed to those who have seen accreditation as a means whereby serious students can enter higher education often at higher than Access level and have become enthused by such opportunities. It is probably fair to say that links between students and tutors have been preserved if not strengthened by the processes of accreditation as will be seen below.

Accreditation - gains and losses

Is the distinctiveness of continuing adult education as characterised in the previous relationships between students and tutors a strength or a weakness? It might be argued that students in mainstream higher education would envy the experience of (relatively) small group teaching in the continuous company of one tutor, yet they may well benefit from the diversity of approaches from a teaching team representing differing academic specialisms. In this way, continuing education students (especially those who intend to progress into mainstream provision) are 'normalised' by becoming accustomed to the teaching and learning employed within it, as Wagner has suggested. In fact, Wagner considers that special pleading on behalf of the distinctive nature of continuing education is counter-productive since this 'implies that it is deprived'. Accreditation is therefore seen as the agency whereby adult students can be perceived as being similar to other students and share in the benefits which were largely unavailable to them previously (Fieldhouse, 1996: 238). This is particularly the case where access to library and IT facilities are concerned, which serves to enrich the discourses between students and tutors and empowers them further.

Even if previous relationships between tutor and students were less fragmented and intensive than appears to be the case in a mass higher education system, it would be dangerous to assume that the quality of pre-accredited continuing education courses were of an acceptable standard simply because they were offered by universities. It is the awards and qualifications made available by accreditation which ensure the overall standards of teaching and learning. In the past, low drop out rates and positive student feedback may have been one way of measuring tutor quality but this needs to be set against the geography of much liberal adult provision in areas where other alternatives were unavailable.

Accreditation and its developing systems of credit exemption and transfer has often facilitated progression from (largely level 1) continuing education courses to first degree programmes in the awarding institution, but it should also be noted that many students choose to stay 'put' in the first level for considerable periods. This decision may be due to a variety of reasons including the choice of courses and subjects to be sampled, the flexibility and pace of accredited study modes through the level, or as a means of slowly gathering confidence and study skills. These are real advantages built upon a system which has traditionally operated on an 'open' entry basis. However, they may be problems for continuing education departments if there are too many students accumulating credits at one level, (or not taking them at all) if the funding becomes based on student achievement. Accreditation may therefore prove to be an inherently destabilising force unless more and different students can be persuaded to take credit, or to progress further through part-time degree programmes offered within continuing education provision itself. The latter strategy is particularly problematic since there are also implications for the training and retention of part-time tutors who will be responsible for the delivery of provision above level 1.

Since 1994 these issues have become apparent in relation to the recruitment to and the development of a history curriculum for adult learners at Exeter, and the remainder of this paper will report on the progress made so far in terms of curriculum and tutor development.

History and the continuing education curriculum

It might be appropriate to set continuing education history provision at Exeter in context first. Archaeology and local history classes appear to be the most popular subjects with students in the region, and this 'market led' provision reflects the interests of many students who have retired to the South West, or have focused their educational interests around 'place'. The same applies to many part-time tutors too; one might describe them as having 'gone native'. However, there may be more deep seated reasons as to why adult students tend to opt for local history courses usually distanced in time from the present. As Husbands has suggested (Husbands, 1996:75) the way adults view the past is informed by contemporary concerns, and in times of acute social and technological change, they may well choose to delve into village history or the local gentry of times past. The influence of a burgeoning heritage industry in the South West may also influence the choice of the adult student in favour of 'country house and castle' type courses.

Given the probable shift in recruitment away from the more traditional education student (middle class, over 40 and with previous qualifications) a curricular debate has arisen between self styled local historians who wish to preserve the traditional continuing education 'antiquarian impulse' (Rogers, 1989:24-25) and social or cultural historians who wish to promote more modern and historiographically led subjects. Although this debate is reflected in academic circles, particularly about the nature of history itself, the accredited continuing education history curriculum should not be developed in isolation. The questions be addressed within it relate to both pragmatic and subject based considerations; to what extent is it possible to retain the allegiance of existing students whilst incorporating more of the 'new' history into the curriculum and how many extra or different students are there for whom it might prove to be more attractive? Equally, how may local history tutors become acclimatised to accreditation if the history curriculum becomes more informed by that of mainstream provision? Exeter's new part-time degree in Historical Studies which is by definition assessment driven and designed to attract students interested in gaining further qualifications, may be

perceived as the thin end of the wedge here. In such instances the loyalty of part-time tutors may be strained to the utmost and the *kudos* of working for a university rather than for other adult education providers becomes less attractive.

If Exeter's experience is typical, then one solution is to effect a balanced curriculum which seeks to meet the needs of as many tutors and students as possible.

Towards a balanced history curriculum

We might define and apply the term 'balanced' in three ways. Firstly, it is important that at least some *non*-accredited history provision remains, either in the form of day schools or classes in rural areas where transport to the regional centre is problematic, and in order to preserve the continuing education tradition of provision in the university hinterland. Secondly, accredited provision must retain some of the standard local, regional and document based provision whilst introducing courses which venture into modern times, attempt to broaden and deepen student's knowledge and introduce them to topical debates and issues within the discipline. Thirdly, as Marshall recommended some time ago, the 'regional and the local' aspects of history should be put together, (Marshall, 1978: 10) and balanced in some way which enables broader issues or themes to be explored in this context. Otherwise university continuing education departments may be vulnerable to the charge that their courses in local history lack academic credibility, or as Schurer suggests, to describe local history as such is a contradiction in terms (Shurer, 1991: 106).

It is perhaps appropriate here to discuss what is meant by 'local history' in the contemporary continuing education framework, and its relationship to a balanced history curriculum. It could be argued that, far from being antiquarian in pursuit, some local historians argue for the legitimacy of focusing the minds of students on local issues in order to highlight the social and economic deprivation of their region over the centuries, and that course design and and content should reflect a concern for social justice. No doubt many students would echo these concerns, especially those who might be attracted to an accredited curriculum. However, a comparative regional or national approach is essential in order to contextualise these concerns, and to achieve an intellectual and objective balance. It is by no means clear that this balance is achievable by many local historians, who lack the resources available to undertake such comparative surveys. By the same argument, it would appear essential that some encouragement should be given towards tutor development in this important and challenging area.

Exeter's new part time degree in Historical Studies might be seen as going some way to reconcile the needs of students and the strengths or preferences of tutors insofar as fusing local, regional and academic history is concerned, and at all levels of undergraduate study. Amongst other topics it offers Level 1 students *Themes and Issues in Local and Regional History* whilst those in their second or third year of degree level study can opt for *Landscape and Society in Britain from 1550.* These courses incorporate the best practice of previous local history provision whilst engaging students in current historiographical debate as well as documentary analysis.

Some of Exeter's level 1 shorter courses also include more emphasis on modern history and methodologies which are specifically designed to address academic debates. For example, *Local History in the Twentieth Century; Myths and Memories of the Second World War* enables adult learners to design, implement and evaluate oral history questionnaires on evacuation and the Devon and Exeter blitzes in order to assess the extent to which Britain did 'pull together' on the home front. *Eminent Victorians in Devon* enables a team of tutors to introduce history to new students by the fusion of the local and regional with a more critical, Stracheyesque perpective on the lives of relatively unknown 'movers and shakers' of Victorian society. *Eminent Victorians* has enabled students to see the wider, national 'picture' in terms of the conflicts between science and religion, the position of women, class relationships, the 'land question' and so on, and to appreciate the cultural and ideological shifts of the period through the means of auto/biographical rather than documentary evidence.

A further means of balancing the continuing education history curriculum is by way of introducing aspects of feminist history especially since this is an issue which promotes the distinctiveness of continuing education as opposed to the often 'malestream' history curriculum in universities, and since so many students are women. If Exeter's experience is typical in terms of the difficulty in running such courses in the past, then levels two and three of the new degree offers modules on *Women Changing History* which may prove to be more attractive to the client groups it is expected to recruit. Equally significant to this development is the importing of these modules *back* into the mainstream university curriculum whereby students of all ages will be able to participate through Exeter's Modular Degree programme.

Thus, this balanced accredited history curriculum, by not slavishly imitating but actually influencing mainstream provision may meet the expectations of students and tutors within continuing education whilst embedding in the processes - and acceptance - of accreditation. However, the thorniest issue - of how to assess history students - still presents many challenges especially since increasingly degree-led provision appears to lend itself to the traditional, essay-type or examination modes of assessment.

How should history be assessed?

From the perspective of students it appears to those working towards an award that assessment adds value to their learning. Stehlik's recent findings echo some of the statements of current history students who, whilst employed and busy elsewhere

> despite themselves, grow to appreciate and actually enjoy the process of learning, the value of finding the questions and answers for themselves; the satisfaction developing their professional skills and the stimulation of interaction with other consenting adults.
> (Stehlik, 1998: 76)

If this is the case, then it could be argued that the assessment of history should enable students to develop the transferable skills required for vocational purposes, especially since it is often forgotten how far the continuing educational curriculum is intended to fulfil them. Thus, whilst essays are still an important part of the assessment process, they may be supplemented by other strategies, especially if students are expected to develop presentational skills not normally associated with the study of history in higher education. One illustrative example from Exeter is an experimental, three term course
in *British Heritage Studies* whose target group of students (mostly young, working or interested in personal or professional development) are able to develop their communication and group based skills whilst gaining a wider knowledge of the academic issues surrounding the nature and management of heritage.

British Heritage Studies also shows how the continuing education history curriculum can provide viable alternatives to the traditional country house *genre*. As Chase notes, a 'closer engagement ' between liberal adult education and the heritage industry may be necessary in order to 'stimulate... students to a more critical and effective consumption of its products' (Chase, 1996: 59) and which as a consequence develop the 'transferable thinking skills' which adults require in order to increase their general academic awareness (Benn and Fieldhouse, 1998:16).

Perhaps the best example of how small group work can be fed into the continuing education history curriculum is exemplified by the way in which students collaborate to produce oral history questionnaires in the local history based *Myths and Memories of the Second World War* course as discussed previously. This has the additional benefit of all students participating in the assessment process as a natural outcome of the course, since the completed interviews together with reflective group, tutor and individual evaluation form the assessed component. Local history groups prior to accreditation were often active in collecting oral historical records, so this exercise too builds upon good practice in continuing education. If local history tutors are unable to come to terms with accreditation, as appears to be the case at a recent conference; ('Whither accreditation?' Some may have wished to delete the letter 'h' in that title) then surely this type of course might function as a

means whereby the most assessment hostile students and tutors are able to pursue local history profitably (*Conference of Regional and Local Historians,* 1998: 2).

On a less course specific basis, the study of local history can help adults to develop transferable skills across a wide range of abilities. For example, students could collaborate to produce and present a Community History project, 'learning and thinking with others who are learning and thinking' in the best androgogical tradition (Allman and Mackie, 1981: 15). As an assessment, this project could be designed for groups of students who had an abiding but not necessarily academic interest in history, who could devise a town trail, educational resource pack or a short village history for the good of the community. Groups of more academically oriented students could investigate a particular archive or collection in order to create a bibliographical user's guide. Such projects could be peer and tutor assessed and include a group presentation. The taught aspects of the course ought to be minimal, encouraging student's self directed study, and enabling the tutor to focus on the transferable skills which students would be expected to demonstrate. It is in such situations where part time tutors in particular would need training in non-subject specific areas. This raises interesting issues in terms of the need for research projects related to the training and development of part time tutors on how to identify and develop transferable skills.

It could be argued that a more vocationally oriented continuing education history curriculum should focus not only on the professional but the personal development of adult learners, and again, the study of local history is particularly appropriate here. It appears that there are a number of students who wish to become more involved in local history societies, perhaps acquiring a volunteer 'leadership' rôle through learning *(Local History Magazine,* 1996: 15). Whilst participation in an accredited Community History project would benefit such students, their confidence and personal development would be greatly enhanced by some form of accredited award. It has also been suggested that such acknowledged competence in local history may also encourage students to become involved in aspects of the local heritage industry, thereby ensuring that the tourist literature produced is both accurate and informative (Mills, 1994: 227).

Conclusion: the experiences of part-time tutors in accredited programmes

This paper has shown how accreditation within continuing education can become increasingly student-centred especially in terms of assessment, teaching and learning strategies and in personal or professional development. It has also indicated how part-
time tutors might become integrated into the same processes insofar as history is concerned. Other than impressionistically, however, or by using a case study approach as shown in this paper, continuing education practitioners do not seem to have addressed the way accreditation is perceived or handled by those who deliver it, what their professional needs may be and how to resource this. There is surely a case for research here, either at the tutor/student or university/student interface, especially as it will establish how tender or robust a plant accreditation has turned out to be.

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Only connect: constructing the compleat adult educator/student

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Introduction

> *While I continue to stress to students and colleagues the desirability of communicating in plain, jargon-free language - and try to follow this advice myself - I have always had great difficulty in explaining what I do for a living to anyone working outside education (and frequently also to those within). I usually start by saying 'I work in a university'. If they reply 'Oh, you're a teacher', I then have to say 'Well, some of the time'. If they say 'In what department?', and I say 'Continuing Education', I know their next reply will be 'What?' It just sounds so incestuous and navel gazing. I have tried saying 'I'm an academic' or 'I'm an intellectual'. This usually stops the conversation dead and appears rude. Mostly now I try and avoid such questions like the plague.*

Research, teaching and learning are the staff of life for people like me, working in a Continuing Education department in an old English university. Much of the justification for our employment is tied to teaching, but we are also under considerable pressure to actively research and publish. If we fail to do either of these well enough, and are judged as wanting in research or teaching quality assessments, our future will be grim. Beyond that, but somewhat in contradiction, we continue to try and share an underlying faith in the importance of learning for all adults, ourselves included, a belief now (re-encapsulated in the notion of lifelong learning).

The education of adults offers a rich and rewarding field, therefore, for considering the connections between research, teaching and learning. Whether our involvement is as an educator or as a student, and whether it is within (in the English context) further, higher, adult/continuing or professional education, manifold and complex understandings and linkages may be recognised. The purpose of this paper is partly to unpack and discuss some of those understandings and linkages, and partly to suggest - assuming that they are healthy and worthwhile - how they may be pro-actively developed.

The remainder of the paper is organized in three main sections:

1) **defining traditions**, which explores common understandings of the roles of research, teaching and learning in the different arenas of post-compulsory education;

2) **seeking connections**, which examines alternative ways in which these three activities may be seen as being connected; and

3) **getting connected**, which discusses strategies for embedding such connections in practice.

The paper is based largely on an analysis of existing thinking on research, teaching and learning relationships within the adult, further and higher education literatures. This analysis has been supplemented with illustrative anecdotes and personal reflections on practice, which have been placed in italics.

Defining Traditions

> *As an academic of a certain age, it could be said that the only role I have received any preparatory training for is researching, in that I successfully completed a PhD. Even*

here, however, I was offered no training course (though I had had some research methods training as an undergraduate in the same department), and was left largely to my own devices by my supervisor (which was my preference). And my PhD was in a subject far removed from adult/continuing education, and led to no publications or further research.

As a student, I received no training in how to learn, though 'learning to learn' sessions are commonplace now. As a lecturer, I was given no teacher training, though these are mandatory for new staff now. In each case, I have of necessity picked it up as I went along, with occasional advice and many mistakes. Until recently, the very idea of an academic job description would have seemed laughable to many practitioners. With little shared understanding of what our work entails, it is surely no wonder if the actual or potential relationships between aspects of our work are even less appreciated.

It has to be recognised, at the start, that research, teaching and learning are variously understood and defined.

Research may, in a restrictive and traditional sense, be seen as the business of universities and research centres ('mad scientists' in 'ivory towers'). It is common nowadays, however, to see it as part of the general curriculum, and not just in post-compulsory education but in schools as well. Researchers are also employed by many organizations: television producers and lifestyle magazines, drug and chemical companies, survey firms and local councils. It can be difficult to see just what all these activities have in common, but one general definition of research would be: 'planned, cautious, systematic and reliable ways of finding out or deepening understanding' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1996, p. 5).

Teaching has, for most people, overwhelmingly strong connections with school. One, rather clever, definition is as follows: 'teaching is a practical activity in which a "learned" person "learns" his [sic] pupils" (Oakeshott 1967, p. 157). Contemporary writers on the education of adults tend to shy away from such a unidirectional, master/novice, transference view. They may prefer to call themselves educators or facilitators, and talk about the development or encouragement of learning rather than the delivery of teaching (Tight 1996).

Learning has, of course, been the subject of a great deal of research by psychologists and others. To take just two examples of recent learning theorists: for Gagné 'learning is a change in human disposition or capability that persists over a period of time and is not simply ascribable to processes of growth' (Gagné 1985, p. 2); while for Kolb 'learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb 1984, p. 38). Is learning then the process, the product or both, or is it, perhaps in a more commonsense understanding, about 'memorising information'?

On the basis of these kinds of understandings, we may begin to consider the possible relationships between research, teaching and learning as a series of closer or weaker pair bonds.

The notion that **research and teaching** enjoy an essential and symbiotic relationship is a long-standing belief of many within higher education, though it has different resonance for older and newer universities (Hughes and Tight 1995). At the present time, with the advent of mass higher education and the extension of university status to many more institutions, it is increasingly difficult, however, to maintain the position that all university teachers should be engaged in research, or vice-versa. Whether this is desirable or not, it is manifestly not the case, nor has it ever been, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

In the case of **research and learning,** the difficulty is not so much in establishing the closeness of the pair bond but in clarifying the distinction between the two terms. The definitions just given could be seen as being almost interchangeable. Thus, the diagrams of the Kolb learning cycle which can be found, like a contagious disease, in almost any text on adult learning may be paralleled, in research methods texts, by similar, simplistic, circular, unidirectional representations of the research process. Yet, if

research clearly involves and leads to learning, the reverse need not be the case. Research might be portrayed, then, as both a larger-scale and a more deliberate activity; though just where the boundary lies between research and learning must remain highly debatable. You call it as you see it.

Teaching and learning are, to the general public, probably the most clearly linked of the three pairings; but this view is based on a narrow perception of the nature of learning as necessarily class-based, and thus involving a teacher. As adult educators are only too aware, much, indeed most, adult learning, takes place without the direct intervention of a teacher: it is largely a self-directed, experiential and uncertificated activity. This conflict of understandings was well illustrated by two recent national surveys, which - taking different definitional and questioning approaches - found that 40% or 76% of adults had engaged in learning over the previous three year period (Beinart and Smith 1997, Sargant and others 1997).

How, however, might connections between these three activities work be sought or made in practice?

Seeking Connections

> *When I started my present job, it was assumed that I would, in essence, be happy to take on the mix of roles and responsibilities which my predecessor had built up over the years (a not uncommon experience, of course). Clearly, this was convenient to my new colleagues, as no reallocation of work was necessary, and they would not be expected to carry any additional workload. The question of what I might most like, or be best suited, to do within the department's overall remit was not considered then; nor, so far as I am concerned, has it ever really been considered since. Though I had never taught before (I had been a contract researcher and administrator), it was assumed that I was willing and able to teach what my predecessor had taught; topics which I had no particular interest in at the time (interestingly, they included adult learning), and which were unrelated to the research I had done. I was faced, therefore, with a mix of un-related duties and interests, which, for my own satisfaction and state of mind, I needed to try and make connections between.*

Let us start with the first of our pair bonds, and explore in rather more detail the possible nature of the relationships between these activities within the field of education for adults. The other two pair bonds will then be re-considered rather more briefly.

Always accepting that it is possible that there may, or should, be no relationship between **research and teaching,** even in the university - this was, after all, the position of an authority as highly regarded as John Henry Newman (Newman 1976) - there are a variety of ways in which such a relationship might be sought and structured. Thus, the relationship may be thought of as comprising a series of dimensions (see also Hughes and Tight 1995):

1. Research and teaching may be directly linked. The adult educator may be both teacher and researcher, confining these activities to the same specialisms. In these happy circumstances, research findings may be directly fed into teaching, while teaching produces further ideas for research.

2. Research and teaching may be indirectly linked through scholarship or development activity. Where, for example, the adult educator does not research what they teach, they may nevertheless maintain their interest and stay up-to-date by reading and reflecting upon other's research. From a developmental perspective, the adult educator may deliberately seek to start research projects on topics related to their teaching responsibilities, or look for opportunities to disseminate their research findings through teaching.

3. Research and teaching may be linked, but through the group, discipline or profession rather than the individual. Where groups of adult educators work closely together, the research of one

may inform the teaching of another, and vice-versa. Where the working relationship is not close, some indirect linkage may still be mediated through the profession (the community of adult educators) or the discipline (e.g. sociologists, historians, zoologists).

4. The relationship between research and teaching may be seen as one-way or two-way. Adult educators might focus on the link between research and teaching (e.g. dissemination of findings) or that between teaching and research (e.g. taking up new areas of interest for investigation), rather than both.

5. The relationship might well involve time lags. Not all adult educators are completely up-to-date with current research, nor are all researchers as well informed about developing teaching practices and curricula.

6. Finally, to inject a further note of realism, the relationship may be seen as varying with the nature of employment contracts. Leaving aside any notions about the adult educator's love of teaching and research, pragmatism dictates they may have little choice about their work roles and relationships. If your contract gives you time for research, you may well do some; if you are employed as a researcher, you will probably do only such teaching as you are contractually bound to.

Similar observations may be made about the connections within the other two pair bonds. Thus, in the case of **teaching and learning**, the relationship may also be indirect, one-way or two-way, and embody time lags. In this case, in contrast to that of research and teaching, the relationship may also involve both adult educators and adult students.

We have already noted the widespread occurence of learning without any explicit teaching. The reverse would, of course, be rather more concerning, though that is not to say that it does not occur. Where there is a relationship between one or more teacher(s) and one or more learner(s), this need not be direct or face-to-face. Distance and open learning schemes provide many examples of this relationship being mediated through text, audio or video tape, broadcast, telephone or computer conference.

In the case of the third pair, **research and learning,** research may be seen as informing learning through the development of knowledge and understanding. This may again be an indirect, one-way and/or delayed relationship, but in this case the connection seems much more likely to be direct. As has already been indicated, it is hard to conceive of research taking place without some learning, even when, as often happens, the project goes disastrously wrong. The linkage is also clear when a learning programme embodies a (usually small-scale) research project as an element, whether individual or group work is involved.

Getting Connected

> *The World Wide Web offers a wonderful metaphor for lifelong learning. You log on, you select your 'search engine' (what a revolting term!), you type in some key words and let it rip. In a short while, a vast series of sites with a greater or lesser relation to your subject of interest will be selected and listed. You start to access a few of the more interesting looking ones near to the top of the list. Some of them take ages to access. Some of them are irrelevant. Some of them are of some relevance, but tell you little new. Some do not go far enough, and contain few cross-references to take you further. Occasionally you hit lucky or make a serendipitous connection, but mostly it's just bloody frustrating. My more technologically literate colleagues assure me that there are wonders out there, and that all it needs is a little persistence and practice. I, on the other hand, believe that I can do much better, in most cases, by using more conventional avenues for information.*

From the discussion so far, it seems clear that, whether as an adult educator or an adult student, it is difficult to avoid making some connections between research, teaching and learning. In many cases, of

course, these connections may not be comprehensive or continuous; but where they work, and work well, there is evidence that they can be very satisfying.

It is assumed here that such connections are beneficial to the overall learning experience. As has been noted, teaching or research without learning are clearly unsatisfactory. Teaching or learning without research, broadly interpreted, would be better termed undesirable rather than unsatisfactory. If this is agreed, the issue then is how to facilitate or develop such connections further and more effectively where they do not already exist. Indeed, this might be seen as part of the duties of the committed adult educator or student.

What possible strategies, beyond those already identified, might be used pro-actively to further develop connections between research, teaching and learning in the education of adults? Here are six suggestions for adult educators:

- organize student project work around your own research interests;
- teach research through practice, placing emphasis on work-in-progress discussions;
- exploit students' employers as research sites;
- conduct joint literature searches and analyses, with colleagues and students;
- use students and colleagues as the subjects of research;
- construct courses as continuing research programmes.

And here are another six suggestions for adult students:

- maintain a diary of your learning and research experiences, as an aid to reflection;
- view all your experiences, whether directly related to learning or otherwise, as potentially researchable;
- share your learnings with others, and build them up into larger projects;
- offer to lead parts of any courses you are involved in on which you have expertise;
- offer to assist others involved in research projects which interest you;
- publish and disseminate your findings in some form.

These lists are not in any way comprehensive, of course, and readers may have other and/or better suggestions to add. The strategies suggested are also practiced, to a greater or lesser extent, by many adult educators and students. Indeed, some of them embody elements of the common core of adult education thinking handed down from generation to generation: e.g. making use of students' experience in teaching, starting from where the student is.

Conversely, it also has to be recognised that in many circumstances it may be difficult or impractical to adopt some of these strategies. I would not pretend to make use of all of them myself, for example, whenever I can.

The key point underlying these suggestions, though, is the desirability of making fruitful connections, wherever possible, between our research, teaching and learning practices. Such connections add to the overall experience and make our lives more rewarding.

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Post-modern Teaching: the Facilitation of Learning

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Introduction

The notion of 'global classroom' has spread widely in a few decades. In Taiwan, as a result of a dramatic economic growth and the ending of martial law in the 1980s, there has been a tremendous effect on the Taiwanese society. It has since been given the impetus to move towards a metropolitan society. Jarvis states: 'Taiwan's society has progressed into a post-modern one.' (1996)

As a result of these changes, the trend of overseas study tours has been generated to complement traditional classroom teaching in Taiwan as occurs elsewhere. My research focuses on what learning impact the study tour can have upon adult students. The research samples the Taiwanese students who went abroad (to Europe, but especially to the UK) to study a particular interest during a period of time ranging between a few days to months. It includes both qualitative (interview and participant observation) and quantitative (questionnaire) investigations. Although the research area and samples are for Taiwanese consideration, ideas from the research can be applied to most study tours.

Using examples from my research, I aim to demonstrate the importance on making connections between research, teaching and learning and also on the facilitation of learning in post-modern education.

The Study Tour as an Adult Education Activity in Post-modern Society

In the last few decades, society has progressed into a post-modern age. The changes in society can be evidenced in political, economic, social, cultural and educational contexts. Westwood (1991) has outlined a post-modern agenda for adult education. She suggests (1991, 44) that 'the debates surrounding post-modernism have a special resonance for adult education and should be on the current agenda'. The perspective of adult education is therefore essential here.

The ideas of adult education cover a great range of activities in which adult learners engage, in order to improve or broaden their existing knowledge, skills or abilities. The debates therefore centre on the issues of 'what sort of knowledge, skills or abilities can be regarded as adult learning activities' and 'what methods of teaching can be applied to them'.

Many adult educators have offered different definitions of the term 'adult education': Legge (1982), Groombridge (1983), Rogers (1986), Elsey (1986), Long (1987), Liver (1969) and Haygood (1969) have all defined it in their own way. Jarvis (1995) implies that adult education is associated with the idea of liberal education. Jarvis (1995) states that:

> The term 'adult education' carries specific connotations in the United Kingdom which implies that it is specifically liberal education, and this also has a stereotype of being a middle-class, leisure time pursuit. Underlying this implication is the idea that the adult's education has been completed and during leisure time, the adult self-indulgently improves or broadens existing knowledge, skills or hobbies.
> (1995, 20)

Jarvis believes that adult education should aspire to be liberal education. Indeed, the liberal aim is one of the purposes of adult education (Elsey, 1986). The well-known 1919 Report points out that adult education involves a wide range of learning activities, processes and agencies. From this point of view, study tours can be included within the concept of adult education.

Knowles (1970, 38) defines andragogy as 'the art and science of helping adults learn'. In a recent clarification of assumptions of andragogy, Knowles (1979) acknowledges that andragogy focuses the attention on the continuum of adulthood. He claims (1973, 27) that Confucius and Lao Tse of China, Jesus in Biblical time, Aristotle, Socrates and Plato in ancient Greece all 'perceived learning to be a process of active inquiry, not passive reception of transmitted content'. Jarvis (1987, 11) contends that adult learning 'is not just a psychological process that happens in splendid isolation from the world in which the learner lives, but is intimately related to that world and affected by it.' It is important to learn people's value and culture especially in this post-modern perspective. Rather than learning from the available words, the best way of experiencing this is to 'be there'. Hutcheon (1989, 8) states: 'the post-modern appears to coincide with a general cultural awareness'.

As the world is changing rapidly in political, economical and social dimensions, the 'way of delivering knowledge' needs adjusting. The reason for having the study tour in the past was to offer the aristocracy a 'further education' after normal schools; at the present time, the purposes of the study tour are both to provide a completion of classroom teaching and also to enable students to cope with changes in society, politics and economy. By actually 'being there' to experience the culture, the study tour helps in developing a student's state of mind and furthermore helps them to cope with the changes in society.

The rapidly changing phenomenon, the learning environment of the overseas study tour, contains freedom and uncertainty, to which traditional classroom teaching methods can no longer be applied. One may ask whether there is a certain way of imparting knowledge from tutors to students and whether tutors play the same roles as they used to in this post-modern society. By research into the experience and practice of the overseas study tour, this paper aims to focus on the idea that: 'Teaching is one way in which learning is facilitated (Jarvis, 1995)'.

Study tours involve the experiences of other cultures, especially, when travel to other countries is involved. The level of cross-cultural interaction will increase. Thomas (1991, 18) implies that adult education can encourage the view that cultural diversity is the great new reality of our age and that we have to learn to live with people through difference.

Many people argue that the barrier between "visiting a place" and "doing a study tour" is vague. Whether the study tour is a part of adult education will depend on the study tour itself; whether it embraces a certain level of educational and cultural objectives for the students. People might argue that the study tour is more recreation than education. However, what should be remembered here is that Elsey (1986) states that recreation is also one of the aims of adult education.

Some debates in the Global Classroom Conference in 1997 are related to 'self' and 'others' in relation to the study tour. Some argue that the study tour can either improve one's cultural awareness towards one's own or embrace others' cultures. Sarup has offered his view on this by explaining 'particularity' and 'universality'. He states:

> Particularity refers to the individual agent. Every man, to the extent that he is human, would like--on the one hand--to be different from all others. But on the other hand he would like to be recognized, in his unique particularity itself, as a positive value; and he would like this recognition to be shown as many people as possible. Universality refers to the social aspect of man's existence. It is only in and by the universal recognition of human particularity that individuality realizes and manifests itself. (1988, 23)

The argument here is that the study tour has urged students from 'individual' towards 'social' dimensions. This can help one to experience and learn more about other cultures and at the same time be more aware of one's own. The idea of the study tour should be regarded as a means of developing personal growth (by this I mean experiential learning, cognitive learning and self-directed learning) and social advancement in the context of cultural education.

The role of teacher in post-modern society aims to facilitate learning--'assisting adults to make sense of and act upon the personal, social, occupational, and political environment which they live in' (Brookfield, 1986, Preface vii). Although teaching is not always needed during the study tour, the teachers seem to face a bigger challenge--that is to provide prompt guidance, help and correction and to trigger students' experiencing their own self-realisation.

Research Findings

From the results, a pattern of teaching was found. Among all my 9 research groups, there was no specific way of passing knowledge to students from tutors. Tutors did not actually teach, they have performed their role differently in the study tour, preferring instead to provide their care and prompt help when it was needed. In addition, one role of the tutors was to help to improve the interactions between the students. When the interactions were high, the learning was enhanced. This provided the learners with a friendly atmosphere, a secure feeling and guidance while learning. Rogers's (1986, 118) four main roles for teachers: **a leader of the group** (to keep the group together and things going), **an agent of change** (to help to bring about changes in skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour), **a member of the group and an audience** are in evidence here. Teaching is no longer seen traditionally but rather as a method of facilitating learning.

In the overseas study tour, learners can encounter any sort of problems both in terms of the subject studied and also in the real world. In overseas study tours, students may encounter more problems than at home both in culture and in life. When students met problems and tried to solve them, tutors, at this moment, were more facilitators rather than teachers. A significant finding of this research was that a lot of students stated that they benefited more from those experiences than from their original purposes in attending the study tour, no matter what these were.

Parker (1997) states that adult learners receive shocks (in terms of learning) from time to time. Those 'shocks' can be negative or positive. Being in an unfamiliar foreign setting, students lose their confidence and experience social shock to varying degrees. When adult learners face shocks in life or learning, the learning outcomes can be unexpected (Parker, 1997).

When students are in a foreign setting, their knowledge of the local culture and life may be limited, although there might have been some pre-tour preparations. The student starts learning through first-hand contact--what is seen, what is felt and what is understood. The student can not avoid confronting and encountering problems which can affect learning. The student has to learn how to solve these problems. Through experiencing and problem-solving, great achievements in learning may result.

In an overseas study tour, many unexpected encounters may occur. According to the students' answers, most of their negative feelings stemmed from being 'insecure'. When a negative feeling or experience happens to the students, the role of the teacher is to facilitate and accommodate the learning. Traumatic experiences, as Torbiorn (1994, 35) implies, can be used later on in the learning as a good adjustment if the compensation of the mistaken situation is improved. Therefore, prompt help and facilitation of learning are considered crucial, especially when problems occur.

Dewey (1938) highly recommends that learning through experience is important and necessary in terms of education. Although, he has pointed out a few conflicts between traditional education and actual experience, he still thinks, at the end, that there is a connection between both. It was found that the respondents benefited most in terms of their personal experiences. These experiences can be categorised into two areas: students' *personal achievement* (being more independent, more open-minded and more aware of what they want and what knowledge has been learned) and *learning about other cultures* (attitudes and the concepts of other cultures as well as awareness of their own culture). These two areas of change seem to reflect the theory of experiential learning.

In terms of personal achievement, many students thought that what they had learned most in the study tour was 'becoming more open-minded', 'becoming more independent', 'becoming more assertive',

'having a more cosmopolitan view' and 'learning to work in a team' etc.. According to the research, when students were put in a foreign setting, not only had they 'to learn', but also 'to survive' and 'communicate'. Asking for directions, taking the underground or making friends, students had to overcome the fear of breaking the cultural barriers and the fear of speaking a foreign language. They also had to learn how to take care of themselves. As Torbiorn (1994, 35) implies, the impact of a sojourn abroad is the personal growth which indicates more as a matter of increased understanding rather than the changes of behaviours or reactions.

The influence from being in a foreign culture can be greater than what the learners expected before the tour, as many students stated that they learned a lot from other cultures. Learning about a culture does not mean just learning from the people, but also from everything in the places visited. Dilsaver and Panton (1989) state:

> More broadly, they may absorb information about societies and cultures in a form which no textbook can convey, as a result of direct contact with local people in their own environment. (1989, 45)

In the study tour, students are introduced to a new civilisation. When students visit fields, museums, places of interest or have language courses, they contact different cultures and they learn from them. Hence, the cultural context is important to the study tour. Of course, before the tour students have their own thinking, expectation, insight, understanding and evaluation about the places visited. How their concept about the cultures visited changes will depend on the contact with these cultures. Understanding the fact that different people have their own cultures (as reflected in their behaviour, words thoughts etc.) and being aware that those cultures might appear in different forms, can help students interact more confidently and enjoyably with others who are culturally different. Adler (1975) says:

> In the encounter with another culture the individual gains new experiential knowledge by coming to understand the roots of his or her own ethnocentrism and by gaining new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture... Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself. (1975, 22)

From the results of the survey, the level of contact with foreign cultures in these three types of study tour did not make much of a difference, although the level of contact was higher when students lived with host families. After the study tour, the students said that they could accept the other cultures better and, furthermore, they became more aware of their own culture. Some students even thought that after the study tour, they felt that they had become more patriotic and more aware of their own culture.

> At the same time, however, globalisation induces effects of cultural specificity... The globalisation of culture, then, far from repressing the local and the specific, actually stimulates it. (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997, 3-4)

Mind can be cultivated through the interaction with human culture. One of the contributions of the study tour, both in culture and education, is to create a 'cultured person' (Williams, 1989, 11). Conforming to different cultural environments' is a means of doing this. The term 'cultured person' in this post-modern age means something different than it previously did. It can involve knowledge of a range of different ethnic cultural experiences. Jones (1996) indicates that multi-cultural experiences can provide students with the chance to reinforce their conception and maybe to correct their misconception about other cultures. Prinz (1988) states that such experience will provide positive changes for students about other cultures.

The role of the teachers and the interrelationship between the role of the teacher and that of the facilitator are evident in this research. As **an agent of change**, the teacher needs to praise and be aware of students' changes in terms of their new skills, knowledge and experiences. By doing this, the teacher can help to ensure that students become more aware of their own learning styles, interests and of themselves--that is 'self-realisation'. Brookfield (1986) suggests:

> Through developing such a sense of their uniqueness and of their ability to control aspects of the teaching-learning interaction, learners will find that their personal investment in, as well as their motivation for, learning is enhanced. (1986, 61)

Connections between Research, Teaching and Learning

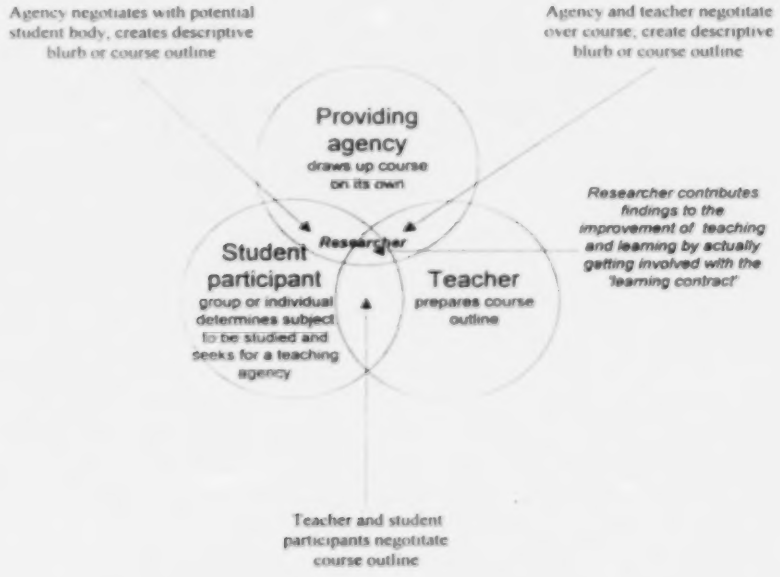
It happens very often that researcher, teacher and learner do their job without communicating with each other. In my research, it was found that the students had made a lot of complaints concerning the quality of the tutors and the arrangement of the study tour. This phenomenon has reduced the quality of learning.

In Rogers's (1986) three categories of his learning contract, there are provider, teacher, and learner. Rogers recommends that teacher and student should negotiate the course outline together; provider and teacher should participate in the decision making over the course; provider should seek student's opinions about the course outline.

Rogers's learning contract somehow misses the contribution the researchers can make in improving the quality of education. The researcher, as seen in the diagram, should be included in this learning contract by actually getting involved with the process of learning, teaching and decision making. Brookfield (1986) suggests:

> This can be done by selecting appropriate resource materials and by framing the investigation of new ideas, skills, or information in terms that are accessible to the learner, given his or her past experience. (1986, 12)

It is hoped that through linking up the researcher with the learning contract, improvements on adult teaching and learning can be therefore increased.


Agency negotiates with potential student body, creates descriptive blurb or course outline
Agency and teacher negotiate over course, create descriptive blurb or course outline
Providing agency
draws up course on its own
Researcher
Student participant
group or individual determines subject to be studied and seeks for a teaching agency
Teacher
prepares course outline
Researcher contributes findings to the improvement of teaching and learning by actually getting involved with the 'learning contract'
Teacher and student participants negotiate course outline

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Lost and found: 'cyberspace' and the (dis)location of teaching, learning and research

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The relationships between research, teaching and learning are inevitably changing in a world characterised by a blurring of boundaries between knowledge and information, yet where 'knowledge' is accessible to many more. Pedagogy can no longer be seen simply as the 'authoritative' transmission of canonical bodies of knowledge by research-based 'experts'. Increasingly, research and pedagogy follow different imperatives, in the UK at least in higher education where the link has always been supposedly closest. Equally, where 'learning' rather than 'education' is increasingly foregrounded, there is a separation of teaching from learning which both reflects and contributes to the inappropriateness of notions of pedagogy as 'transmission'.

Central to these shifts are the possibilities opened up by the development of information and communications technologies. Their deployment has challenged long-standing traditions in complex and contradictory ways, facilitating on the one hand, an emphasis on performativity in the sense of systemic efficiency and on the other, an emphasis on learning (and learned) outputs from a multiplicity of sites and a diversity of sources. In this paper, therefore, we will look first at the way knowledge is being reconfigured as a consequence of its interface with information/ communications technologies and what this implies for research and its relationship with pedagogy. Second, we will examine the development of what is now increasingly referred to as 'cyberspace' and the spaces thus opened up for new relationships and possibilities in pedagogy and learning. But in keeping with our theme of 'lost and found' we will also highlight some of the limitations and dangers posed by these new relationships and possibilities.

Reconfiguring knowledge

As knowledge becomes reconfigured by the logic of information and communications technologies, new opportunities for learning and demands for new kinds of learning are stimulated (Lyotard 1984). Technologically mediated knowledge becomes commodified into information and provides the basis for individualising learning in a more complex and active way. Through the Internet, e-mail, CD-ROMs and hypertext, possibilities are presented for individuals to access information, interact with it and other learners, and thus learn more flexibly without the need to attend institutional centres of learning. At the same time, subjects (in the sense of bodies of disciplinary knowledge) and their transmission become relatively less important in relation to, for example, multi-disciplinarity, multi-literacies and transcoding, and 'imaginative' skills of gathering information and connecting it together in new ways.

One effect of the use of these technologies, particularly in the accompanying development of 'cyberspace', is that 'canons and authorities are seriously undermined by the electronic nature of texts...as texts become "hypertexts"...the reader becomes an author, disrupting the stability of experts or "authorities"' (Poster 1997: 214). Knowledge then is not only commodified but also decentred , functioning in an environment where epistemological boundary making is not so potent. Predictability and certainty become less the norm and paralogy, or the acceptance of dissensus and conflict in what constitutes knowledge, is more readily seen as a positive value.

Stronach and MacLure (1997) argue that the very nature of research is changing as its space is compressed and where it is more obviously politically influenced. With the decline of traditional research cultures, there is a demand for 'relevance', immediate policy pay-offs and a direct instrumental contribution to system efficiency. It could be said, although not unproblematically, that the need to seek and carry out performative research not only leaves little or no time for teaching but

more significantly has contributed to diluting the connection between these. But against this, information/communications technologies and the disseminative power afforded by their use can enable research outputs to more swiftly inform teaching.

In research, there seem to be two trends pulling in opposite directions. The demands of performativity pull towards closure and a locking in of research to an economy of the same. Equally, however, there is more of a possibility for a transgressive or 'hybrid' research that works 'between the spaces' of established and newly emerging performative research cultures. We can characterise this as a (dis)located research - a research that recognises the necessary intercomplexity of the closed and the open, the bounded and the unbounded, the traditional and the emerging.

At the back of this is what Stronach and MacLure refer to as a contemporary 'un-ruliness' of knowledge, the dissensus mentioned earlier about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge-production manifested in the epistemological and methodological questioning of postmodernity. Performativity plays a significant role here in subverting canons of knowledge and traditional ways of doing research - its demands both close and open possibilities, contributing simultaneously to the strengthening and loosening of boundaries.

At the same time, however, performativity and its demands is not the whole story. In discursively constructing the 'active researcher', successive research assessment exercises have also reinforced an economy of the same - for example, through the foregrounding of 'output' and the differential weightings attached to different kinds of output (McNay 1997). Knowledge production is repositioned in terms of individual and institutional performance, thus making the boundaries even stronger. But again it is possible to point to tendencies in the opposite direction. First, given that the logic of cyberspace is participatory and interactive, the wider use of information/ communications technology enables research to be subject to a peer review which goes beyond judgements by colleagues in the same academic discipline to include research subjects and stakeholders. Second, as an aspect of the dissensus or decentring of knowledge, one of cyberspace's effects is to problematise the convention of authorship (Lankshear 1996). The distinction between informal communication and scholarly publication becoming less easy to maintain, thus making possible the repositioning of knowledge production as something that is not exclusively in the hands of university based researchers.

With the commodification of knowledge and the individualisation of learning, research begins to move uneasily from the ivory tower into the marketplace. As universities gradually lose their status as primary producers of knowledge, they become part of a wider knowledge market, forced to compete with R&D companies, consultants and think-tanks. As Plant (1995) points out, universities are less able to control access to knowledge when it increasingly takes the form of information circulating through networks outside the control of educational institutions. With these developments comes a need to think anew about what constitutes research and its relationship with pedagogy and learning.

Cyberspace

> Each self exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at nodal points of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be.
> (Lyotard 1984: 15)

In recent years, 'cyberspace' has developed rapidly both as a concept and an actuality. The explosive growth for example, of the Internet is indisputable although its significance and effects is contested. Part of the key to this growth lies in the Internet's technological structure of costless reproduction, instant dissemination and radical decentralisation (Poster 1997). However, due weight must also be given to factors which are not the outcome of technology alone, such as for example, its openness and accessibility. It cannot be understood simply as an efficient tool of communication but as a social space which stimulates new forms of interaction, helps in restructuring and forging creolised identities, and produces new relations of power, for example, between teachers and learners.

Featherstone and Burrows (1995: 5) define cyberspace as - 'a cluster of different technologies, some familiar, some being developed and some still fictional, all of which have in common the ability to simulate environments within which humans can interact'. It is both a space and a non-space; a (dis)location - something that is both positioned and not positioned, (dis)placed but not re-placed, a diaspora space of hybridity and flows where one and many locations are simultaneously possible. It's significant, as Featherstone (1995) points out, how frequently metaphors of movement figure - for example, 'flows' originating with Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and their notion of rhizomatic branching networks as a way of critiquing fixed boundaries and identities, or positionalities.

Flows, through globalisation and space/time compression, deterritorialise people, images and information, commodities, money and ideas (Appadurai 1990). Wark (1997), borrowing an image from geometry, refers to flows as 'vectors' (lines of fixed length and direction but with no fixed position), arguing that we all now live in a space of vectoral flows not bounded places. A vector is a trajectory along which information or anything else can pass and in the contemporary scene vectors have become faster and more flexible, in the process connecting anything to anywhere and creating a new space of possibilities. Cyberspace then is the emerging deterritorialised terrain of vectors.

Wark (1997: 57) claims that one consequence of this is that cultural differences are not so closely tied to experiencing particular places....'vertical differences of locality, ethnicity are doubled by horizontal differences determined not by being rooted in a particular place but by being plugged into a particular circuit'. This is **antipodality** - 'the experience of an active trajectory between, places, identities....rather than a drawing of borders, be they of self or place' (ibid). Antipodality is the experience of (dis)location - of being neither here nor there but both here and there - created by vectors of transnational and globalised communication. This (dis)location or dis-place-ment is part of the postmodern condition with identity marked by a postmodern geography where 'marginality and otherness increasingly figure as the signifiers of identity - to "be" in the postmodern sense is somehow to be an Other' (Bammer 1997: xii). Information and communications technologies provide the means of enhancing these postmodern possibilities for different forms of identity. The new relationship between place and space where for example, through World Wide Web sites more and more people are connected electronically (Kaplan 1996) creates networks, communities and identities that both locate and dislocate learners.

The mediation of social relationships and identity by new technologies is perhaps best expressed by the notion of the 'cyborg', a term first coined by Haraway (1991) and defined by Featherstone and Burrows (1995: 2) as 'a self-regulating human-machine system... a human-machine hybrid in which the machine parts become replacements, which are integrated or act as supplements to the organism to enhance the body's potential'. For us, the significance of the 'cyborg' lies its hybridity, its embodiment (literally) of the breakdown or blurring of boundaries between nature and culture, technology and nature, bodies and subjects, active agents and involuntary machines. Beller (1996: 194/5) argues that 'the cyborg is the absolute limit figure for the conjunction of the global and the local - the intersecting of the human being from anywhere in the world...and the technology endemic to transnational capitalism'.

The 'cyborg' can be seen as a metaphor for that restructuring of boundaries which characterises the contemporary condition where hitherto fixed boundaries between subjects, bodies and the world are no longer so stable and impermeable. With this comes a questioning of the analytical categories deriving from such fundamental divisions, for example between technology and nature, which have structured the 'reality' of the world. In educational terms, this implies a restructuring of those hitherto bounded oppositions of formal/ informal, teacher/ student, classroom/ home, print text/ electronic text which play such an important part in defining educational 'spaces of enclosure'.

Implications for pedagogy

Lankshear et al (1996) argue that education as a modernist institution is characterised by the 'spaces of enclosure' of the book, the classroom and the curriculum - spaces which work to enclose meaning.

The learner's task is then one of extracting a singular canonical meaning and the teacher's that of being the 'authority' in terms of interpretation and accuracy. They maintain that cyberspace calls all these spaces into question - the fixity and stability of the word, the linear text with definitive meaning, the teacher as authoritative bearer of meaning. There, it is argued, the rules are more egalitarian, purpose-driven, self -imposed and self-monitored. Cyberspace creates a reader-controlled environment or at least an environment where the distinction or boundary between readers and writers becomes less clear and consequently textual production and interpretation become less bounded. Hence, learners are more able to determine their own paths of learning where they do not simply interpret pre-given meanings but actively collaborate in its creation. In cyberspace practices, meanings are more readily negotiated by its users (Featherstone 1995).

Cyberspace therefore seems to signify a questioning of modernist systems founded upon ideas of centre, margin, hierarchy and linearity and where notions of multi-linearity, nodes, links and networks seem more appropriate. By undermining the stability and coherence of the book and creating new forms of textuality and intertextuality, the modernist subject with a core, fixed identity is called into question. With this, comes the need to re-think pedagogy in terms of multiplicity, of multiple paths and non-linear forms of learning and teacher-learner transactions.

This would seem to suggest more opportunities for learner-centred pedagogies in shifting from teaching to learning. But this learner-centredness is different from that of humanistic experiential pedagogy since, as Lankshear et al (1996) point out, this is a pedagogy which is self-directed and purpose-driven rather than oriented to achieving the externally imposed meta goals of modernist education. In the 'virtual' classroom the focus moves away from the teacher as the central authority responsible for validating input and encouraging consensus. The teacher-student relationship can also be reconfigured since potentially all can be 'experts', given the abundance and availability of information in the sites and networks of cyberspace.

If teaching and learning are reconfigured in terms of 'links' and 'networks', this also involves a redefinition of the role of teachers. The need now is to learn how to access and use information, although this particular role is one that teachers may have to share with learners given that the latter may often be more knowledgeable and skilful in cyberspace environments. The availability and accessibility of information may also help release teachers from their traditional role as providers of content to that of making the learning process explicit and transparent, for example, helping in the framing of questions and ensuring that learners critically interrogate that which they encounter in cyberspace. As Tabbi (1997: 239) points out 'the digital medium…encourages a branching discussion in which students link up to a network…the pedagogical dynamic is more provisional, not question-answer but comment-elaboration with cues coming from a number of centres besides that of the teacher'.

This is a point which is also emphasised by Green (1993) who argues that learning has traditionally been conceived in terms of 'interiority', a particular kind of cognition and mental development, linked to a normative view of rationality. He suggests that in postmodern conditions of knowledge, we perhaps need to think of how forms of learning and cognition are themselves changing in ways which question the very assimilation of learning to cognitive interiority. We could perhaps then see new technologies as 'amplifiers of human attributes and capacities, and hence of human potential; as prosthetic devices which enable learners to operate differently' (Green 1993: 28).

Here we are presented with the interesting notion of the learner as a cyborg - an argument which although provocative does remind us that cyberspace affects not only pedagogy per se but the identity of learners too and with that changes in perceptions of what learning is. It's not then simply a matter of performativity, of increasing transactive efficiency, but also of a change in culture. Any critical understanding of the effects of new technologies and practices requires an evaluation of the type of subject it encourages - not the foundational subject of consciousness but a subject with hybrid identity constructed through communicative practices. When information can be taken up and used freely, identities as learners are constructed without policing by an external epistemological authority. In

cyberspace, the disciplinary distinction between knowledge and information becomes difficult to maintain. 'Legitimate' or 'worthwhile' knowledge becomes that information used in the self-directing and self-monitored practices of cyberspace's virtual communities.

Cyberspace also seems to imply enhanced possibilities for a greater degree of democracy both in the classroom (even if it is virtual) and in education generally. Many see it as an environment where the skills and attitudes necessary for engaging in certain forms of democratic decision-making can be more readily cultivated. Tabbi (1997) argues that whilst the Internet has been seen mainly as a way for learners to more readily exchange information, it can also function as a forum where differences amongst learners can be articulated and where a greater equality of participation and interaction can be established. Lankshear et al (1996) believe that in enabling access to continuously available on-line information and participation in a range of activities and experiences, cyberspace's virtual communities enhance democratisation. On the other hand, cyberspace, although participative, is not inherently democratic. 'Disciplinary power' could well be re-invested from the transmission of inputs to the examination of outputs (Nicoll and Edwards 1997). Any democratising impulse will remain unrealised if learners are not stimulated to think critically about the impact on their learning of different technologies and the mediating processes that come with them - learners need to be inscribers lest they become inscribed.

Furthermore, whilst a decentred and interactive classroom experience can have democratic effects whether it will still depends on the wider social context. Cyberspace produces new formations of social and economic power and it is against these that its democratic potential must be evaluated. As Gabilondo (1995) rightly points out, there is a need to guard against utopian libertarian technophilia. However, these new formations should not be seen as always fixed and hegemonic. Although contemporary capitalism has a global reach, it does not wipe away everything it encounters.

Many would regard the world of cyberspace as highly problematic. It raises fears of the social effects of on-line existence as people become disconnected from 'real' life and simulacra take over from 'reality'. The communities of cyberspace consist of virtual, often fleeting and anonymous connections that exist only on-line. Tabbi (1997) argues that it is precisely the disembodiment, disembeddedness and decontextualisation (no bodies, no history, no place), or dislocation, of electronic discussion that will limit the democratic potential of cyberspace. On the other hand, as Porter (1997) argues being able to exhibit mobile, multiple and 'made-up' identities may not necessarily be a bad thing if instead of conceiving 'culture' as a homogeneous social sphere we think of it instead as adapting to the free-floating semiotic universe of cyberspace.

Lost and found?

We have examined some of the changes challenging education's modernist 'spaces of enclosures' - changes in what constitutes knowledge which effects the way it is produced (research), organised (curriculum), presented (the book) and delivered (pedagogy). These changes resonate with the move from the fixed institution based space of 'education' to the more open and unbounded terrain of 'learning'.

We have attempted to show how cyberspace, itself both space and non-space, both locating and dislocating, stimulates and facilitates these changes. The vectoral nature of cyberspace makes it a (dis)locating medium for those 'finding' themselves within it - and it is not simply information that is at stake here but identities also. Naïve technophilia and/or technological fetishism both construct cyberspace as a transcendent location, bringing with it in new forms the return of spaces of enclosure, of fixed and bounded space. Cyberspace presents exciting openings and reconfigurations for learners and researchers but there are limitations as well as dangers. In the diasporic unbounded spaces of cyberspace, one can be lost as well as found, lose as well as find.

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The little boy and his antics: redefining knowledge in development worker training

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What knowledge? Whose knowledge?

In the last few months, El Nino, the little boy, has been held responsible for countless storms and floods on one side of the globe, but the devastating drought forecast for Southern Africa, has not materialised. The many scientists whose warnings of the threat of a renewed disaster were splashed across the front-pages of newspapers and issued in stern television reports were wrong, it seems. But something not as yet measurable and beyond our understanding may have happened, and thus the impact of greater global forces on local conditions was averted. Predictions of future occurrences can at best be estimated - not yet foretold with any precision. So, rather than focusing on the scientific accuracy of meteorological forecasts we should critically scrutinise the way in which such data are interpreted and publicised, and who benefits or suffers as a consequence. While urban dwellers were whipped into a frenzy or worry, farmers in the rural areas of Southern Africa noted that some birds had migrated extraordinarily early as a possible foreboding of drought; yet, the modest crop of mopane caterpillars contradicted this early warning signal. They understood the message of possible impending drought to be ambiguous and had two choices: follow the signs of nature and take a chance and plant early, or listen to the 'official' forecasts and in anticipation of a failed harvest, not plant at all. Farmers who heeded the El Nino warning were ruined.

This paper looks at an education and training initiative for development workers in Southern Africa that is aimed specifically at rooting the concept of 'risk reduction' within all development programmes. The initiative was an experiment in linking research, teaching and learning based on the participatory learning and action approach (Chambers 1994; Pretty, Guijt, Thompson & Scoones 1995; von Kotze & Holloway 1996), experiences in worker culture, and Paulo Freire.

In previous work with oral cultural expressions in worker education programmes (von Kotze 1988;1996) workers poets' voices made it clear that knowledge is only worthwhile if it is 'really useful knowledge' (Johnson 1991) when it serves the interests of the oppressed, that is those most excluded from decision-making. Such 'useful knowledge' cannot, as recent experiences with El Nino again show, be based solely on expert systems and scientific processes of knowledge production but must include the information and ways of knowing from different people, especially rural-based women, whose voices may not 'count' for much in the corridors of decision-making, but whose perspectives are informed by what Hart has called 'subsistence knowing' (Hart 1991). We would like to substitute the term 'subsistence knowing' with the term 'connected knowledge', as the functionalist economic orientation of 'subsistence knowing' does not adequately capture the creative, imaginative and aesthetic aspects of such knowledge. Connected knowledge is produced in a collective process and offers multiple perceptions and perspectives of the living and working environment. It is useful as it has been produced out of necessity in the daily lived experiences of people, but it also connotes meaning beyond the instrumental, purely material as it finds metaphors to express more precisely the historical, social and creative-imaginative connectedness between people and their environment- something explained so poignantly by the humanist scientist Athos Roussos in the lesson he gives to his charge: 'Find a way to make beauty necessary; find a way to make necessity beautiful'. (Michaels 1996:44)

The second influence is dialogue, understood in the Freirean sense as 'practices that enable us to approach the object of knowledge. (...) Dialogue characterises an epistemological relationship. Thus, in this sense, dialogue is a way of knowing.' (Freire 1995:379) Research, teaching and learning based on dialogue is a truly collective process; it is partisan both in terms of the educators' standpoint and the definition of what will constitute 'useful knowledge'; it is critical in its questioning of the interest

positions lurching behind enacted, lived policy. Finally, dialogue is defined as and linked to social action both at the practical and strategic levels.

Thirdly, we have drawn on experiences with various participatory approaches to teaching, learning and research. The dissatisfaction with the biases inherent in the 'rural development tourist' approach lead to experimentation with other forms of research and planning (Chambers 1994) and the development of a set of principles underlying interactive participation in which control and decision-making is shared. In terms of our development worker training, we adapted particularly some of the tools for collective investigation to our more directive approach. For example, unlike facilitators of participatory rural appraisal and in keeping with critical thinking and conscientisation, we challenged learners to explore myths and viewpoints that would seek to entrench existing structural relations, rather than seek to change them. In the following, these principles will be explained further.

Manufactured Risk and Virtual Risk

The advent of El Nino may be somewhat unpredictable; the focus on the hazard is not. El Nino provides a useful scapegoat by directing attention towards 'hostile nature' and away from the real causes of risk, human action. It provides governments (and international sentiments) with the opportunity to reassure a concerned public that thanks to scientific methods and knowledge experts they are well prepared to deal with any possible risks and will take the right decisions on behalf of people most in the frontline of attack, and the country as a whole. Headlines instill fear by reminding the public of what nature can do to us and how vulnerable we all are to the impact of natural hazards. But unlike the claim that 'poverty divides, smog unites' (Jansen & van der Veen 1992), hazards do not strike all people equally: the smog hits those most who have no escape route into cleaner air, and whose poor living conditions have already made them susceptible to chest diseases. These are also the people who have no insurance policies, whose social support systems have collapsed and whose economic base is, at best, tenuous. Risk is calculated by weighing up the hazard against the degree of susceptibility or resilience: if I am too poor to buy meat I might avoid being infected by BSE: in this case my poverty is my resilience; on the other hand I might have to take the chance and buy a 'special offer' in order to eat at all - and be even more susceptible to getting sick.

The emphasis on a natural phenomenon as the cause of a threat is a convenient shift in gaze away from those most at-risk, and those who are to blame. Furthermore, the focus on risk management obscures the fact that in a modern risk society risks are man-made hybrids. (Beck 1992:11) The world is marked by what Giddens calls 'manufactured risk': 'Risk created by the very progression of human development, especially by the progression of science and technology'. (Giddens 1998:28). The fear of being sucked into uncontrollable developments emphasises the desire to control. In an environment threatened by nature, scientists are called upon to find a solution to tame the hazard, and educators and trainers are called upon to design and deliver (technical) training that enables people to cope with the perceived threat. There is a whole battery of research concentrating on various technologies, tools and methods for calculating and managing risk. 'Risk assessment' has become a subject in courses for emergency managers being trained in how to prepare operations according to emergency plans as much as insurance brokers. The irony is that recent emergencies such as the BSE, Chernobyl and Rwanda show, that when society itself has become the laboratory 'with nobody responsible for the outcomes of experiments' (Beck 1998:10) no amount of technical information and bureaucratic machinery allows us to predict, forecast and deal with the event. Risks are a kind of virtual reality, real, local and global, but not-yet-existent - a threat that controls our imaginations and makes us fearful of the future, but not yet an empirical observable 'enemy'(Newman 1995).

As long as risks are seen as synonymous with hazard, and defined as being 'out there' (part of nature) there is no one who can be held responsible, and no one will be accountable for the effects of a hazardous impact. This is what Hannah Arendt called the most tyrannical of powers (..), when 'risk becomes another word for 'nobody knows'' (Beck 1998:15). In the uncertainty of 'maybe' we look towards the scientists as the source of assurance, as providing us with certainty and a plan of how to hold off the hazard. Not surprisingly, the majority of disaster management/reduction training reflects this attitude of creating a false sense of security. Knowledge is largely pre-defined, generic and

unconnected to local contexts. There is an abundance of technical information, dispensed by 'subject experts' and scientific analysts in a language that is accessible to peers only. The process of teaching is a classical example of the 'banking style', and learning is assessed on the basis of reproduced information. Learners are regarded as lay people with a knowledge and skills deficit, despite their intimate experience-based knowledge of local conditions. And in much the same way as 'dispensing knowledge' those trained managers of 'hazard induced risks' return to offer emergency aid as an act of humanitarianism and charity, in a cover-up of bad policies and practices in the face of human-manufactured disasters.

Research as Dialogue

Dialogues with many different members of rural communities across Southern Africa on the one hand, development workers employed to improve the living conditions of such communities, on the other, revealed that people who live on the basis of connected knowledge have a very different perception of risks from those who make and implement policy decisions. They know that risks have everything to do with the way in which people elsewhere make important decisions that effect their livelihood security, and how their own socio-economic status entraps them in often unsustainable and unhealthy activities. Asked to comment on why droughts seem to have become more severe these days rural people will give a perfect definition of risk as a combination of hazard and vulnerability. They describe how drought is a hazard that has to do with human agency as much as the weather. They will tell how socio-political and economic conditions forced them to draw on natural resources in an unsustainable way, and how the deforestation and encroaching desertification are consequences of their own short-term perspective and actions that render their environment ever-more vulnerable, in the long term. It is not the drought, but the poverty that has become worse. People are less able to cope with stress and threats to livelihood security such as those imposed during times of drought because they have no time to recover from one shock, before having to confront the next. And their own 'risk policies': large numbers of children and herds of cattle are under threat from globally directed market-oriented development plans.

Within the community-based drought mitigation training we realised that we would have to begin with raising awareness about the different perceptions of risk that inform the attitudes and behaviours towards drought. From previous experiences (von Kotze & Holloway 1996) we also knew that as learners, Southern African development workers are at the interface between two conflicting epistemological discourses: on the one hand, they have intimate first-hand experience of the lives of the very rural people they work with, and are familiar with connected knowledge; on the other hand, they are deemed to be really 'trained' only when initiated into scientific expert knowledge. Development workers attending education and training courses expect a dissemination of such knowledge because that is the convention: those in power, such as teachers, decide on what is worth learning. Previous expose to training facilitated by international professionals has further entrenched such expectations.

We recognised this tension and tried to ease it, from the outset, by directing attention away from virtual realities in a people-less landscape. Instead we made the subjects of the learning and research the focal point. In this way we tried to relocate the focus towards learner participants' perspectives and narratives, and away from the jargon-wielding subject experts. In line with Freire's question of 'How can I enter into a dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?' (Freire 1972:63) we began by showing a film shot in various southern African countries specifically for this purpose. In this film people speak from within the context of their environment about the joys and hardships that are part of everyday life and death during 'normal' times, and in times of drought. We then encouraged development workers to respond to the voices in the film with their own narratives and experiences of working under those conditions. To this, we added information from policy documents and reports written by emergency and aid organisations. In this way a multitude of contradictory perspectives resulted in a complex picture of drought that was clearly more closely linked to politics, than the weather. A collaborative analysis of different interest positions and power relations lead to highly charged learning that connected the local with the global, and later directly informed decisions about action strategies.

Another example that illustrates the merger between teaching, learning and research is around the concept of 'risk' itself. Listening to voices on the film and participants speaking in various Southern African languages I noticed that their language was spiked with references to 'idrought'. There are no words for 'drought', for 'risk', 'vulnerability', 'hazard' in African languages, but there are metaphors and narratives: there is a time 'when the sun never sets', or 'the time of hunger', and the sheer endless number of rivers and towns named after experiences of dry, rainless seasons, of intense suffering and shortages of basic necessities bear witness to histories of living with drought. Villagers will tell of many previous droughts in their lifetime, and describe the various strategies employed to survive. But they will never refer to drought (or floods for that matter) as a 'risk'. Giddens has suggested that the concept of risk does not exist in 'any traditional culture': 'The reason for this is that dangers are experienced as given. Either they come from God, or they come simply from a world which one takes for granted' (Giddens 1998:27) This perception of risk is one of many present in Southern Africa, and development workers who want to intervene both practically and strategically have to understand that different perceptions of risk lead people to make different decisions and take different actions.

Dialogue is about more than simply a sharing of information. Learners from the various Southern African countries exchanged often quite detailed information, for example about regionally specific strategies to mitigate the impact of drought. But such exchanges have to result in new insights in order to qualify as knowledge. Out of an activity investigating livelihood practices arose a critical examination of the different status, life chances and oppression of children in a household. Learners came to realise that they themselves act as oppressors in their own households with regard to children who do not have direct kinship relationships. The exploitation of the children's labour power was not balanced by the relative social security that household membership offered. Children cannot be regarded as a uniform category in household surveys, but must be desegregated and appraised individually, and with regard to different indicators.

As educators we attempted to create the conditions for a dialogue in which all partners were in pursuit of mutual and common interests, that is those of the people most at-risk. And so, unlike facilitators who simply listen, seemingly neutral, we directed the dialogue, insisting on a 'subsistence perspective', one 'that recognises that all over the world women have become the main carriers of work and responsibilities connected to the affirmation of lives.' (Hart 1997:134) Descriptions of daily livelihood activities lead to an analysis of who does what within a household, and what happens when the time for carrying water increases from ½ hour to 2 hours, during times of drought. We challenged uncritically held viewpoints, such as the claim that men's infidelity could be viewed as a form of 'social support', and initiated and guided discussions around contradictions, towards consensus.

In the connected learning environments of rural areas knowledge is intimately linked to life experience. Nature and natural hazards are not disconnected from human experience; risk is not an anonymous virtual threat. What we tried to construct was a teaching, learning, research process as a collaborative effort of generating information which was analysed in terms of it's underlying politics of who decides, who assigns, who controls, who knows, who benefits, in both discourses of technicist and subsistence knowledge. On the basis of new understanding participants suggested actions aimed at reducing risk, both at the practical and at the strategic levels.

Opportunities and Action

Manufactured risk is not a problem of 'false consciousness' and action aimed at changing perspectives and attitudes is not enough; change must include structural elements. Beyond making suggestions for practical action, such as forming a network for the distribution of useful connected knowledge, learners were particularly concerned with strategic action. If risks are socially constructed, manufactured by those who wield the power over those who are most dis-empowered, they can be re-made, changed. Risks thus become opportunities to be potentially powerful tools for destabilisation. For example, an expose of agricultural drought being the result of political decision-

making about land-rights and access to water, about distribution of seeds and the appropriation of local skills for commercial purposes could be used as a lobbying tool for policy changes. Similarly, towards the end of the education initiative, development workers suggested launching a public challenge to development policies that do not grant women access to loans, or favour industrial giants over small-scale farmers in providing timely support.

In the effort of reducing risk, adult educators based at universities and elsewhere can play an important role. Anna Coote suggests, 'We need a new political culture which supports an informed and reasonable scepticism about scientific or expert knowledge. (Coote 1998)
Our experience has shown that participatory teaching, learning and research is not a technique but an ethical and moral decision that takes a standpoint on the side of those whose connected knowledge is still not recognised and given a voice unless it can fetch a good market price as in the case of some indigenous knowledge about plants for medicinal use. This is where we can make connections in the education of adults.

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The silent death of the radical voice: knowledge and the South African state

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This paper addresses the question of the degree to which agencies that were actively involved in the struggle for liberation in South Africa have adjusted to changes since the inauguration of the democratic state in 1994. Particular attention is paid to those non-governmental and community based organisations that had a specific educational and cultural role during the period. The data used derives from interviews with thirty workers attached to twenty three agencies in the Durban area of Kwa Zulu Natal.

For many years under the apartheid regime many oppositional voices were forced into civil society as access to a genuinely democratic political arena was denied the majority of South Africans. As a result the non-governmental sector mushroomed to meet the legitimate needs of the people. Direct overseas funding enabled many NGOs to operate independently and provide spaces for educational and cultural action aimed at supporting the liberation struggle. However, it should be noted that NGOs/CBOs are best seen on a spectrum. At one end were those organisations - often working on a charitable basis - who perceived their contribution to education as providing service to the underprivileged. Such organisations observed their tasks as largely technical and politically neutral and, for example, were happy to co-operate with the apartheid government to provide literacy provision for the rural populations. At the other end some organisations were little more than fronts for the ANC to engage in direct propaganda and organising, and in extreme cases to organise aspects of the armed struggle.

The importance of education during the period was marked in that not only were many people denied access to any meaningful schooling, the alternative of Bantu education was a parody of education and led ultimately to the school boycotts of 1986. These latter events intensified the pressure to find alternative educational ways forward as another generation looked set to lose any access to formal development, and generated the Peoples Education for People's Power movement which is commented on below.

The nature of the educational work was widely varied but provided the opportunity for many oppositional groups to enable a multitude of voices to be heard. Not only direct political debate articulated around the struggle itself, but education articulated around the needs of women and rural communities (see Walters and Mannicom,1996) developed along with struggles concerning own language teaching and tribal and regional identity. It might be worth noting in passing that the regime actually exploited some of these aspirations for specific identity in an attempt to divide and rule(Freire,1994) as in the obvious case of the creation of the homelands, the violent results of which still scar South African society. Freire's own theoretical work provided guidelines for a major literacy drive called Learn and Teach, vestiges of which still remain, and evidence exists of innumerable self help groups ranging from study circles to factory-based political education activities carried out overnight after the working day had ended. It is the decline in the level of the critical activity associated with these organisations that is the concern of this paper and reflects a growing unease in South Africa, reflected in the recent comments of the Premier of Kwa Zulu Natal:

> For all our talk in South Africa about the importance of "civil society" as the underpinning of democracy, we cannot claim to be overly well-endowed in respect of independent voices of conscience and protest. There are literally hundreds of non-governmental organisations, and even more so-called community-based organisations. Yet they seldom produce anything for public consumption that is really independent. One sometimes wonders whether they exist at all, but you certainly find them waiting for the government gravy trains to pull into the station. (Ngubane,1998).

The fact that there is much to challenge in the current South African context is well reflected in the major social tensions that have arisen over the first five years of transition. Despite the fact that the current government is one of national unity, it is dominated by the presence of the African National Congress and the shifts in their policy reflect basic contradictions that have had direct effects on the poor communities and yet have not been the subject of substantial attack or protest from the organised groups in civil society. These contradictions are best summarised by comparing the original 'blueprint' for the new South Africa, *The Reconciliation and Development Programme* (ANC,1994) and the overall economic policy adopted and outlined in the government publication *Growth, Employment and Re-distribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy* (Department of Finance, 1996).

The development plan lays great stress on the immediate priorities of meeting basic needs and the creation of opportunities for all in co-operation with the people. Its consensual nature is stressed and it promises a continuing dialogue with the people as the core of government:

> This document is the result of many months of consultation with the ANC, its Alliance partners and other mass organisations in the wider civil society....
> It represents a framework that is coherent , viable and has widespread support. The RDP was not drawn up by experts - although many experts have participated in the process - but by the very people that will be part of its implementation. (Mandela,1994)

The second document outlines a macro-economic policy hingeing on neo-liberal principles and stressing the control of public sector spending in favour of priorities supported by the international financial institutions and the promotion of free-market ideology. The nature of this policy is neatly captured by one minister who recently referred to the GEAR proposals as "South Africa's voluntary structural re-adjustment programme". The espousal of the orthodoxy of global capitalism (Brown and Lauder,1996) the chase for inward investment, the pressure to hold inflation at a low level by tightly controlling public spending, and active intervention to keep down wage levels all feature largely in recent policy. At the level of educational reform the universal feature of vocationalism has emerged with the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (see Human Sciences Research Council, 1995), with the related paraphernalia of competence-based outcomes, and the promise of occupational mobility and a skill revolution. The human capital rhetoric is not often linked to the reality of the need to create occupational opportunities in a country in which an estimated 35% of the potentially economically active are unemployed. This vocational discourse is also challenged by the fact that occupational development is hampered by the presence millions who are not technically literate and on whose education the state is actually spending less than when it came to power.

While there is some recognition of the need to address the emerging tensions by considering a broader participation in macro-economic policy (Gelb and Bethlehem,1998), the educational sector typifies the way in which the current policies impact on the lives of normal people and, apart from the much publicised "failure" of the state to provide acceptable levels of security, education has become the most high profile domestic issue. Parents are asked to pay more towards their children's schooling, part-time teachers are dismissed for lack of resources to pay them, and established staff are given early retirement in order to lower permanent staff levels, thus depriving the schools of their most experienced staff. This continues against a background of the introduction of a highly complex outcomes-based national education system based on student -centred approaches, demanding well-resourced classrooms and skilled teachers. Government policy speaks of class sizes of 35 while, at the time of writing increasing numbers of schools are actually closing through lack of staff(Daily News 22 April,1998). The reality in Kwa-Zulu Natal is well summarised in a recent review of provision:

> ... there is an appalling shortage of physical facilities and infrastructure in public schools. A significant number if the 5,340 public schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal lack essential services. The survey reveals that 531 schools have no sanitation facilities, 1913 have no

> water on site, 3559 have no telephones and 3,314 have no electricity. Further, 14,500 extra classrooms are urgently needed to accommodate those who want to attend school. (Zafar, 1998 1).

The gaping rift between rhetoric and reality is impossible to conceal and yet a concerted critical response, even at the level of sustained intellectual critique is largely absent. What follows are the reasons for this "silence" given by thirty members of non-governmental organisations ranging from trade unions to literacy initiatives. All of the participants were active in the field during the apartheid years and during the recent period of transition. Their "explanations" tend to cluster around three particular areas and, where possible, they are allowed to speak for themselves.

> The first and most readily offered explanation was that there remains an established loyalty to the ANC -- the organisation around which opposition to the apartheid regime clustered :
>
> For years the struggle was about black and white in more ways than one. The government was on one side and we were on the other. You don't really lose that because of the changes. Lots of people are waiting for us to fail, so no matter how bad things are you have to stick together.

However, evidence of the potentially problematic nature of this unity was revealed by the way in which some groups were virtually obliged to subsume their specific concerns those of racial oppression:

> You should look at the women's groups to see what happened. We would discuss away for days and sing songs and talk about domestic oppression and the need for liberation, but when things became serious and we all met together we had to put these things aside and get on with the struggle.

This characteristic of the tendency to not recognise substantial differences within the oppositional movement is commented on below.

At the very practical level, as the ANC was unbanned and the new government came into being many of the leaders of the NGOs were co-opted into official positions in central and local government. Some argue that this shift deprived civil society of some of its best and most articulate critics. Others suggest that by joining the ranks of the state those who should be leading the mass of people are under a self-imposed silence, variously interpreted at best as misplaced loyalty or at worst unjustifiable compromise. Yet others point to the fact that the current government is one of national unity, representing all shades of political opinion, and that their radical voice is being heard, but has to concede to the will of the elected majority. In the case of this last reading it is the NGOs' responsibility not to rock the boat -- hence the apparent compliance.

Secondly, the issue of financial support is considered of prime importance. Over recent years the amounts of aid into South Africa has begun to decline and is channelled increasingly through central government agencies. Also, many NGOs have disappeared as their function is now redundant -- such as those serving as front organisations for the political groups. The remaining agencies have tended to become locked in a system of competition for a share of the centrally held resources. The results have been two-fold. Firstly, there appears to have been a marked decline in inter-organisational co-operation between previously allied groups:

> In the old days we all had different funders for the work (literacy provision) now we usually have to vie with each other for what's on offer. You're not going to help the opposition, are you. There are occasional turf wars. I always think it's like a schoolkid keeps his arm around his book to stop anyone from copying.

The rise of the "bid culture" was regretted by all of the interviewees, but there were no suggestions as to how matters could be improved.

Secondly, and of more importance in the context of this paper, is the changed relationship between the agencies and the state. As the key fundholder the state has begun to have unprecedented power over the future of the NGOs. Some have benefited by becoming "conduit" agencies: organisations contracted to deliver services in areas where the state does not have the appropriate infrastructure. For example, Educare, a large NGO devoted to pre-school care of children is contracted to make provision for its client groups across several parts of South Africa including a large food distribution programme in the Western Cape. As contracted service providers to the state their situation has become more dependent on governmental favour.

A large majority of those interviewed felt that there was a danger that their independence has or would be compromised by the new situation and their freedom to operate as a critical agency diminished:

> It's simple. You can't bite the hand that feeds you. Most of us (NGOs) now depend more on the government. Even "independent" funders usually check they have the state's approval before they allocate resources. My staff have families and bonds(mortgages) to pay, and I can't see them in the street because I think that we've been betrayed and the government hasn't got a clue what it's doing. You shut up and get on with it.

Apart from the obvious reference to the tendency to silence, the last comment also touches on the frequently mentioned feature of organisations experiencing varying degrees of goal displacement. There has been a perceived tendency for some NGOs to move away from their original goals of supporting social change to the maintenance of the agencies as an end in itself to provide continuing work for the current incumbents. Although this last comment may have a cynical ring, it was frequently expressed with considerable sympathy for those concerned.

Perhaps the most interesting observations arose around the third issue: the doubts about the radical nature of the work in civil society in the past. There was certainly evidence of some NGOs engaging in extremely rigorous work with a clear -- in this case communist -- social purpose:

> We organised sustained and demanding programmes We tried to look above the current struggle to the bigger picture. We definitely wanted to use the shop stewards as become the leaders of the working people and by-pass the more conservative union leadership. We wanted to create organic intellectuals who had an understanding broader than the immediately local, and who treated the people as more than a mass that should follow the leaders mindlessly.

The Gramscian inflection of this comment suggests both theory and educational strategy, but in many cases it was felt that the educational/cultural work of the NGOs was largely atheoretical and in some cases based on fundamental mis-readings of stated principles. This point was best exemplified by reference to a movement explicitly committed to literacy provision based on Freirean values:

> I don't think it (Freirean theory) was fully understood at the conceptual level. They took the surface things -- themes and codifications and the like -- but I don't think they understood what it was intended to do. It became a method. It became a kind of "relevant' education, where you used local issues and language to help people to read -- a kind of cultural social sight vocabulary and nothing else.

More charitable was the worker who suggested that the field workers were not sufficiently skilled to deal with circumstances after the changes:

> During the apartheid years the nature of oppression was on the surface of life. Everyone could see it and thematic analysis was relatively easy -- the oppressive nature of social contradictions was apparent to everybody. Now it's not so easy. Things are under the surface and analysis -- even if they are up to it -- might produce some uncomfortable findings. You might find your former allies oppressing you now -- and no one fancies that!

Finally, broader issues emerged around the tensions between homogeneity and independence of groups during the struggle. Repeatedly workers referred to the fact that the apparent unity during the struggle was sustained by what one called a "negative" force, in that it was a unity in the face of a common enemy. There was no systematic cultural struggle to "bind" the groupings to a particularly radical position:

> We knew what we were against. I'm not sure we knew what we were for particularly. We thought this would be a lot clearer once we'd won the battle. We stood shoulder to shoulder with lots of people. We kept our eyes to the front and didn't look to the side that often.

This tendency to get on with the struggle without too much concern for theory was noticed earlier in South African educational politics in the case of the People's Education movement in the 1980s. Emerging from the school boycotts in the mid-eighties People's Education was seen as a potentially pre-figurative model of post-liberation education working in favour of the dispossessed. However, as a result of its theoretical fragility, certain features of its work -- parental control of schools, student representation -- were able to be actually co-opted by the apartheid government and the movement's radicalism dissipated (Levin,1991,Watson,1997).

Any conclusions from the above must be highly tentative, but the references to Gramscian concepts, which are familiar to adult educators, may help to point to some issues. Firstly, the apparent hegemonic position of the ANC may be fragile despite appearances. If the consent given to the leadership was contingent of the existence of the apartheid oppressor, there may not be the internal cohesion to prevent major fractures. In this sense the "rainbow nation" may crumble apart into its original components. Given Gramsci's insistence that historic blocs need the cement of ideology to bind them and above all to guarantee their maintenance (Gramsci,1971), the distinctly low levels of work during recent years may see the tensions arising in society begin to threaten the hegemony of the ANC. The latter may hold the reins of state but their reforms are still locked in the demands of global capital and the contradictions generated may be too strong for the current ideology to tolerate (Venter,1997, Pilger,1998).

This leads to the final comment concerning "liberation" in South Africa. What is the nature of the transformation in South Africa? Certainly the worst excesses of the old regime have been swept away and there has been the introduction of basic formal rights for all South Africans. Services such as water and electricity have been supplied to many communities and these achievements should not be denigrated, but other inequalities continue in newly articulated forms. Formal rights do little to eliminate economic inequality. For example, the cost of schooling varies widely and, although every child has the right to attend the school of their choice, only those with money can exercise that freedom. Life chances are now distributed by financial factors rather than skin colour -- while the poor remain largely untouched.

Perhaps Gramsci's concept of 'passive revolution' is a final key. He argues that under severe pressure those controlling the state will make major concessions in order to maintain the dominant social order. It could be that we have seen the ultimate form of this tactic. While acknowledging that handing over the sate to the majority is at one level revolutionary, but the major economic relations remain untouched as the country seeks its place in the world market. It may be argued that we have seen the control of the state traded off in order to re-align a regime of accumulation which will continue to produce inequality and poverty. It is for others to investigate this, but for educators it is intriguing that there is little evidence of these issues being openly debated in a civil society in which

the politicisation of the population was so actively fought for in recent years. For educators, to address these issues is not an act of betrayal but a constant and creative challenge to guarantee a liberatory future with the active support of the people.

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Learning together about spirituality: a co-operative inquiry group

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Introduction

This paper will outline a co-operative inquiry group set up by staff working for a Cancer Care Charity in Manchester. I will look initially at the context and methodology involved, then describe the activity of the group and finally discuss some of our findings and possible future developments. The process of co-operative inquiry has been a valuable learning experience for members of the group. Together we have been researching our experience of spirituality. Together we have been learning and teaching about the scope and variety of that experience. This has enabled us to use that experience in our work.

Context and Methodology

The Neil Cliffe Cancer Care Charity was founded in 1992 and offers services, at two cancer support centres, to people with cancer and those caring for them (Leedham and Platt 1998). The focus of these services is on rehabilitation, aiming to support people with cancer as they adapt to changing circumstances. Involvement is most appropriate around the point of diagnosis, during treatment and at possible recurrence. The stated aim of the charity is:

> to enable individuals whose lives have been affected by cancer to adapt to their changing needs by providing a range of multidisciplinary, community based services, including education and support for health care professionals and others
> Leedham and Platt 1998).

Health encompasses more than physical well being (WHO 1946). Palliative care particularly looks for good quality of life including social, psychological and spiritual aspects (WHO 1990). A recent document by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts outlines the potential benefits of an holistic approach to health (NAHAT 1996). Although the Neil Cliffe Cancer Care Charity aims to provide an holistic service, staff working at the centres were aware that our understanding of the spiritual lags behind that of the physical, psychological and social. At the same time I, a member of the multidisciplinary team, was interested in exploring this area as part of my research into adult learning and spirituality. Cooperative inquiry seemed a particularly good method for exploring this very personal area. Cooperative inquiry, or participatory research, rests on the principle that people are self determining (Heron and Reason 1984:86). Research into human experience should therefore be 'with' people rather than 'on' people (Heron and Reason 1984:87). Cooperative inquiry is a cyclical process where periods of reflection result in specific actions. Reimmersion into activity and experience is followed by opportunities for further reflection. Heron suggests that there are three strands to co-operative inquiry: inquiry, emotional/interpersonal and collaboration (1996:65-72). At an open exploratory meeting in June 1997, nine people expressed an interest in being part of the co-operative inquiry group. The eventual group comprised seven women, with varied backgrounds in terms of both their role at the centre and their spiritual/religious outlook. The group has met for three reflective periods over the last six months and intends a final review meeting in September this year. Sessions, except the initial open meeting, have been taped and typed transcripts produced. Notes from each session were prepared by myself as facilitator and distributed to group members after each meeting. The stated aim of the group is 'for each of us to explore our own spirituality with a view to how that will inform our work'.

Cycling Round the Spiral

Stage One Initial Reflection

The group met for one hour each week during the six weeks of the initial reflective phase. The initial inquiry strand centred on establishing the focus of the research. We brainstormed our ideas about

spirituality. We used one session to discuss images and pictures that expressed our own ideas about spirituality, finding that this helped us clarify each other's ideas and develop our own. As facilitator, I distributed a number of articles on spirituality for people to read and discuss. Other group members also began to bring material for discussion, particularly relating to their own recent experience, both in and out of work. A function of this period was trying to establish a shared definition of spirituality, something that was worthwhile but proved ultimately elusive. Spirituality is often seen as inevitably linked to religion, of whatever type, and we spent a considerable time discussing what we perceived as the links and distinctions between the two. By the final week of this phase the group felt that spirituality was an innate potential in every human being which could be developed in many different ways. Spirituality was seen as something unique that affected all aspects of life. It was both very individual and very connected, reaching in to our inner being and out to others or an ultimate power. Seeing spirituality in this way, we wanted to affirm opportunities for it to be nurtured at the centres. Interpersonally, this stage was characterised by getting to know each other and establishing ground rules. Although all working within the same team, not everyone knew each other equally well. In addition, and this was something we often talked about, spirituality can be difficult to discuss in public. Often seen as very personal and private, people may feel that they will be open to ridicule or misunderstanding if they talk openly about it (Hay 1990). Something so nebulous and individual is also difficult to put into words, an idea that became a major theme for the group's discussions. Recognising that there was considerable room for disagreement, which could spill over into other areas of our work, we established ground rules based on mutual respect and shared responsibility. Collaboratively, we began the process of learning from each other. As we discussed our response to papers or experiences, ideas were challenged and new insights gained. Group members described how their experience in the group began to act as a catalyst for personal exploration. As this was fed into group discussions, our shared understanding developed.

Stage Two Active Phase

After this period of reflecting together, the active phase provided an opportunity to test out our ideas and theories in practice. This group has had two active phases and is currently engaged on a third. At the end of the first reflective phase, group members set themselves tasks for the forthcoming active phase. These were largely individual activities (divergent), although on related subjects, for example, group members chose to further develop their own ideas about aspects of our discussions, to keep a journal or to write about their own spirituality. Our overall focus was on continuing to explore personal experiences of spirituality. In the second active phase the focus was more convergent, looking specifically at how spiritual care is provided at the centres and elsewhere. Interpersonally, on their return from both active phases, several group members reported significant developments. Particularly after the first phase, individuals described developments in their own spirituality. After the second phase developments focussed more on the outcome of tentative efforts to try out our ideas about spirituality in practice with clients. This sense of ideas developing during the active phase was evidenced in its effect on the discussions during subsequent reflective phases where people appeared more focussed. Group members did not opt to work together on a project during the first two active periods, perhaps because of the intensely personal nature of their tasks. In the current active phase two group members are working together on a training project.

Stage Three Full Immersion

This is not sequential to the other two stages but is seen as vitally important (Heron and Reason 1984:88). This element of the inquiry is perhaps harder to recognise and describe. As group members again become fully immersed in their every day activities, they take with them the new ideas developed in the reflective phase. People in the group certainly returned from each active phase to subsequent reflective phases with new insights and sometimes a sense of personal development. Their ideas of spirituality became more engaged with their work, particularly in the second active phase. Group members recognised that stage three was harder to distinguish. With hindsight, they felt that because they became fully immersed in their work during the active phases, it was difficult to notice the effect of previous reflection during this time. Subsequent discussions, however, showed how they had been influenced by the earlier work of the group. The group is currently in a longer active phase, due to end with a reflective phase in the Autumn. It will be interesting to see whether

this longer phase gives more opportunity for immersion or whether people simply lose touch with the ideas of the research. Group members commented that the process of meeting weekly meant that the week between group meetings also provided some sense of the cycle of inquiry.

Stage Four Further Periods of Reflection

Group members returned from each active phase to share their experience and explore how the ideas and plans discussed in the earlier reflection worked out in practice. Further discussion offers the opportunity to revise those plans in the light of experience. This phase takes the cycle round, creating an ongoing process. Continued cycling also helps with the validity of the process, offering opportunities to refine the ideas developed and to test them against experience. This cooperative inquiry group has reformed for two periods so far, a two week block (after an active phase of six weeks) and a six week block (after an active phase of ten weeks). In terms of inquiry, the focus of the group has gradually shifted from varied personal concerns, particularly focussed on discussions about what spirituality is (reflecting the first part of our original aim), towards a more convergent work-based emphasis, particularly focussed on 'spiritual assessment' and the support or nurture of spirituality (reflecting the second part of our original aim). Interpersonally, the group has become more established with a regular core membership of seven people. Several group members reported a greater awareness of the whole area of spirituality and greater comfort in discussions about spirituality with clients and with each other. Discussions in the second reflective phase were more abrasive, with group members challenging each other's beliefs and approaches in a more definite way. Again this is helpful in terms of validity, perhaps more appropriate for this group than the 'devil's advocate' method suggested by Heron and Reason (1984:91). The group has become increasingly collaborative, with a sense of group members gradually owning the research and becoming more involved in directing the discussion and activity. Collaborative working has meant that there has been time and space to explore differing views and ideas. There have been disagreements and continue to be differences but group members now seem comfortable working together. We are even more aware of our differences but there is a level of understanding and support that goes beyond them which was not present before. Different ideas are in fact seen as a positive factor in the group's development, more challenging and stretching than a group which had a shared understanding of spirituality from the beginning.

Discussion

Spiritual experiences may be more common than could be expected in modern, secular society but are often not talked about (Hay 1990:56-59). For most of the people attending the centres, life is threatened by disease or death, throwing concerns about spirituality into sharp relief. This also influences people working for the charity. Most of those joining this group recognised that their interest in spirituality was linked to their current work. When spirituality is discussed in health care it is often assumed to be linked to religion (Ross 1994, Highfield and Casson 1983). Our own group contained both people who did adhere to a particular religion and those who did not, yet we increasing felt that spirituality was relevant to us all. We wanted to find a way of understanding spirituality that recognised this. Cicily Saunders, one of the founders of the modern hospice movement, has been influential in promoting the concept of spirituality as identified with the search for meaning, seeing the human spirit as the animating or vital principle in a person (Walter 1997:25). This way of understanding spirituality draws on the therapy of meaning (logotherapy) developed by Viktor Frankl (1964). Another writer in this field suggests that spirituality is the 'fourth dimension' of human life, defined as the power within a person's life that gives meaning, purpose and fulfilment, the will to live and the belief or faith in self, others and in a power beyond self (Renekzky 1979:215). We found these ideas helpful in developing a shared understanding of spirituality that was distinct from religion. A key factor in our understanding of spirituality was a sense of connectedness, connection with self and with other human beings, with nature and, for some, with a divine power. These understandings were expressed by two members of the group as follows:

> for me, spirituality, I would see as points in my life, it doesn't have to be a good experience, it could be a bad experience, but its points where I feel very much connected to something else

> I identify very strongly with what S was saying about a sense of connectedness and that might be connected to yourself or it might be connected to somebody else

Increased sensitivity to this sense of connection was an essential part of our increased awareness of spirituality. Spirituality was linked with intuitiveness, with creativity, with relationships, with psychological well-being, yet could not be fully identified as any of these things. During the first reflective period group members came to an understanding of spiritual potential as part of every human being, something that could be developed in different ways, or not developed at all. It was this underlying theme that we opted to explore in different ways during the first active phase.

One of the difficulties we found throughout the cooperative inquiry process, and recognised as a problem for others, was that of language. We found it ultimately impossible to define spirituality, although after many weeks of discussion we recognised common threads in our ways of understanding it. Varied experience, particularly cultural, had influenced our individual understandings of spirituality. Trying to move beyond these barriers by discussing and challenging our assumptions helped us to focus our individual understandings as well as to develop shared understandings. This process is reflected well in the following comment by a member of the group:

> able to reflect with people who are safe and comfortable to talk to and add bits like 'well, I don't believe that, oh, I don't believe that' well, that's something isn't it? I now know I don't believe that, that is incredibly powerful isn't it?

We also recognised that people found it difficult to start talking about spirituality, as we ourselves had done before joining the group and in initial meetings. We feared being misunderstood, not having the answers, being wrong! Developing a safe space to explore together regularly helped us to overcome these fears, initially with each other but later with clients as well.

> I feel more comfortable about somebody's spirituality being individual and abstract to them...I think I have a freer idea and I'm more confident

The first active phase showed group members that there were opportunities to talk about spirituality with centre users. But if this was to happen, we ourselves needed a broader understanding of spirituality, a sensitivity to cues suggesting people might want to talk about it, and to be comfortable enough with the topic ourselves to allow them to do so. We began in the group to feel more comfortable about not having clear answers about spirituality while continuing to recognise its importance. Having reached this point we wanted to find ways in which the multidisciplinary team could nurture spiritual potential among clients who desired this. The group had been a key aspect of this nurture for us and we felt that providing safe places for people to explore their own spirituality could be a key way of doing this for others. We also discussed ways of using the environment at the centres to nurture spirituality, such as creative writing or art groups, music and gardening.

Linked to these ideas were discussions about roles within spiritual care. One response to the need for providing spiritual care is to say simply that it is the concern of the professional chaplain, who is usually linked to a formal religious group. This leaves no provision for those without a defined religious belief system. It also limits the provision that can be offered to all, emphasising what we would see as 'religious' needs rather than 'spiritual' needs. We recognised a role for a coordinator of spirituality who would develop the understanding of all staff about what spirituality is and coordinate more formal provision. However, we also wanted to affirm the importance of the whole team's involvement. If this approach is to be achieved there is a great need for training to ensure that all team members understand the concept of spirituality we have developed and that they are comfortable with the issues raised. It is difficult to see how spirituality itself can be taught but we have found that our process of exploration has increased our understanding and awareness.

We became very conscious of the danger of turning spiritual care into another task to be carried out, losing the sense of connection with another human being which had been so important to us. Rather we wanted to keep the sense of vulnerable human being connected to vulnerable human being, exploring together in an area where there are no easy or clear answers. This had been so important in our explorations and underpins our understanding of spirituality, although it also raises important questions about professional boundaries. In the second active period, group members tried out standard assessment questions about spirituality used elsewhere and found some of them helpful in increasing awareness of spirituality. They also ensured that permission to explore the area of spirituality was offered more regularly. However we were never fully comfortable with the idea of a simple spiritual assessment tool. There was an ongoing consciousness that such routine questions could only be used effectively in the context of a therapeutic relationship where health care professionals felt comfortable to explore the issues raised:

> its about role but its sort of beyond role, isn't it? when you have that spiritual connectedness its probably more to do with you and that person

> you just knew it was two spirits meeting and searching and the thing is without answers and not having to give answers and a lot of just being

As the group continued, members reported feeling more at ease with issues concerning spirituality. The opportunity to explore our own spirituality meant that we were more comfortable enabling others to explore theirs. The group had also provided a rare opportunity to nurture our own spirituality without any specific religious focus. Such an opportunity, in a safe, non judgmental environment, seems to us to offer a useful way of nurturing spirituality for other people. A key outcome of the cooperative inquiry so far, apart from the effect on individual's lives, has been our exploration of ways of providing the same opportunity to other staff working in this or related fields. We plan to develop a training module, as part of our regular training programme, for others to explore spirituality in a similar way to the cooperative inquiry group.

Conclusion

Co-operative inquiry challenges the division between research, teaching and learning. We are adults doing research, teaching each other, learning together. For us there are inevitable connections and overlaps between these three activities. The process of the inquiry has generated new understandings of spirituality for those working for the charity. Individuals within the group have increased their understanding of spirituality in a way that affects their practice as well as their life outside work. Co-operative inquiry has proved a useful method to facilitate this process. Such a deeply personal issue requires a person-centred method of research. The experience of the group has been that co-operative inquiry has much in common with reflective practice in a professional environment

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Obsessives, groupies and the role of research in adult education

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Introduction

Amongst the generally agreed and widely accepted purposes of higher education is the development of intellectual skills of the highest order. The report of the Dearing Committee states:

> We take the view that any programme of study in higher education should have as one of its primary intentions the development of higher level intellectual skills, knowledge and understanding in its students. (Dearing 1997: 74)

There are many ways of construing that statement. This paper rests on the assumption that one important and necessary part of the development of higher level intellectual skills is the development of habits and skills of critical thinking. The case for this line of thought has been explored by, amongst others, Ronald Barnett (Barnett 1997). I am not totally happy with Barnett's argument nor with his conclusions, and I think there are significant aspects and extensions of the discussion which are missing from his work. However, for my present purposes the main thrust of his argument is sufficient: part of the purpose of higher education is the development of habits of critical thought.

What is true of higher education in this case is true also of adult continuing education within higher education. We seek to equip our students with the skills of critical thought and to encourage them in the exercise of those skills. Some phrase about developing critical skills or developing skills of critical analysis appears in the statements of aims and objectives of so many courses offered in university adult education that the absence of such a statement occasions comment.

Stating the aim or objective is one thing, delivering is another. It is not always clear just what is meant by skills of critical thinking, now how they are to be developed, nor how their development is to be measured. This is true of higher education generally, and of adult education in particular. However it is clear both in general and in the particular that one of the key skills sought is the ability to contest points of view with reasoned argument. It is also clear that one of the principal means by which these skills are developed is practice: students learn the skills by engaging in critical discussion. In adult education circles this is one aspect of the much-vaunted attention to students' experience and existing knowledge and the encouragement of student participation.

This paper claims that experience in adult education in higher education suggests that the development of habits and skills of critical thought is greatly enhanced if the student's learning takes place in an environment of active discipline-based research. Further, it is claimed that the adult education experience can be extended to higher education in general: if higher education is to develop students' ability to think critically then teaching and learning in higher education must be supported by active discipline-based research. However, the experience in adult education to which I wish to draw attention also suggests that the students may be the researchers.

It is important to be clear what I mean by research. There are, it seems to me, two forms of research. One is the patient accumulation of data to fill out the details of established theories; the other is the accumulation of data which provides new knowledge. The two forms overlap: it may be that through the accumulation of data an overwhelming case is built up slowly for discarding the existing form of a theory; while new knowledge may be a new perspective on existing and familiar material. The crucial difference is that one form of research is undertaken in the spirit of accepting a theory and seeking to enrich it, the other is undertaken in a spirit of exploration on the assumption that the

current theory is open to challenge, perhaps because it does not offer sufficient explanation of some data or specify what happens if we move in a particular direction.

The difference is significant for the claim that the development of critical thinking requires the support of active research. For research of the accumulation kind is not at first sight likely to foster the development of critical thinking. Research of the second, exploratory, kind is much more likely to develop critical thought, because it assumes that knowledge claims are open to challenge, seeks grounds on which they might be contested and encourages the construction of alternative views.

To support this I offer the very tiny evidence of two adult education classes. Each class, I suggest, is typical of a kind of class familiar to practitioners in adult education, immediately recognisable and the subject of much conversation, comment and even complaint wherever adult educators gossip. Because I think these classes are typical, I dare to suggest that we can generalise from them to produce significant insights.

Groupies

The first class I offer for scrutiny is a class in the history of the Reformation. It is taught by a very experienced professor emeritus, who has an international reputation in the field and an enormous enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching. Class recruitment has dropped a little in recent years - it now attracts between forty and fifty enrolments every year only. Only! Would that some of our other courses attracted such numbers.

The class has ben in existence for many years, at least thirty, and some of the regular attenders were present at the first meeting. As one might expect, the average age of the class is high, nearer eighty than seventy. However they are consistent and faithful in attendance. On one day in the last session when all other courses were cancelled due to heavy snow, this particular class carried on, because over forty students and the tutor turned up.

The course is taught over twenty sessions of two hours each, in two ten-week bites either side of Christmas. Each year there is a new syllabus. Over the years the group has covered the history of the Reformation in considerable detail from many angles, but, according to the tutor, with very little repetition.. When the tutor and I were discussing the programme for the next academic session, he was musing on a request from someone who joined the class 'recently': 'of course, he has only been with us for about ten years, and we covered that topic in, I think, 1983'.

To attend a meeting of this class is to enter a bygone world far removed from the pressures of accreditation and notions of student participation. The tutor lectures, very well, without interruption for long periods. The students sit and listen. There appears to be very little taking of notes. Time is allowed for questions and discussion, but, although the discussion seems quite lively, it is conducted within the parameters set by the tutor.

Any analysis of a class of this kind must begin by recognising that we are dealing with a club, a group of people who come together as much for social purposes as for educational purposes. They have grown accustomed to meeting at a particular time every week, and many of them talk of the gap in their lives when the class is not meeting. They are very welcoming, and the class has a warm and very friendly atmosphere, such that one feels it is almost a gathering of friends - which by now it is.

Educationally, what is happening? Certainly people are learning about the (European) Reformation. Certainly the tutor is both an expert in the field and one who keeps up to date with research in the field. The students are presented with information drawn from recent work, and the books available to the class include recent publications. It is an indication of the nature of the group that the class runs its own small lending library of relevant books, purchased through student subscription.

However, I have questions about the educational value of the course. First, after all those years, how much are some people learning? The investment of time and energy seems large for the nuggets of

new knowledge or insight to be gained by students who have attended the class for many years. Second, though time is allowed for questions and discussion, the discussion, and indeed the syllabus, is driven by the interests and views of the tutor. There seems little scope for disagreement, not because the tutor intentionally prevents it, but because the class treat the tutor as an authority and are content to leave the authority unchallenged. At least one person who joined the class in the last two years left very quickly, because when she questioned something she felt that the class became uneasy, if not hostile.

It seems that what we have in this class is teaching and learning in which the teaching is active and informed by research and the learning is largely passive. The research appears to be largely of the accumulation kind, done by an expert who is garnering further information.

The students clearly enjoy their class and get a great deal from it. However, I suggest that what we have here is a class of educational groupies, gathering to hear their guru and enjoy each others company, but, I suggest, receiving only limited education. In terms of the earlier discussion, this class does not offer higher education at least in this, that the fostering of a spirit of critical enquiry does not seem to be a principal objective.

Obsessives

The second class I offer for scrutiny was studying local history, the development of a particular town over several centuries. The tutor was new to the programme, but experienced and knowledgeable in the field. The class recruited twelve students, of whom several were retired but some were in paid employment. There was an age range from mid-twenties to mid-seventies.

The class ran for twelve weeks, meeting for two hours per week, and included one field trip. All the students attended throughout the course, and several asked if friends could join the class part way through, though none of the friends ever materialised. All the students produced some form of written work at the end of the class.

Amongst the students was a retired man who had spent most of his working life as a bus driver. Not surprisingly he had a great interest in buses, but his interest had gradually extended to transport of all kinds. In his retirement he spent much of his time in the local library, and in libraries in larger nearby towns and cities, researching transport history. He had acquired an extremely detailed knowledge of the history of transport in the area, being able for example to reel off from memory the dates of opening and closing of bus, rail, tram and canal routes. Transport history had become an obsession for him, and he viewed everything, past and present, in the light of his knowledge of transport.

Since transport plays a role in the development of any town, the knowledge this student had acquired was relevant to the class he was attending. But transport is only one factor in the development of a town. The student's detailed knowledge had to be linked to other knowledge and incorporated into a larger scheme of thought and explanation if it was to be used in the class. For someone obsessed by one topic and blinkered in view, the process of incorporation could be painful.

To the credit of tutor, student and the class as a whole, it worked. The student was given the floor on occasions and invited to lead parts of sessions where discussion of transport loomed large and his expert knowledge could enhance the class's experience. On other occasions he was firmly reined in, by the tutor ands by other students. When he challenged some historical information or interpretation. his challenge was responded to seriously. However neither the tutor nor the rest of the class let him just make statements; he was forced to explain and defend his own views.

Tutor and students alike found the class a stimulating experience. The tutor was aware of the expertise residing in the class and was able to draw on it, and learn from it. The obsessive student learned too. He was able to put his expert knowledge of one tiny area into a larger context, and was given pointers to fresh areas of research, some of which he followed up during the period of twelve weeks over which the class met. The other students in the class were able to recognise that the tutor

was not the only expert present, and to draw on the expertise of one of their number. This encouraged lively discussion, for all views advanced, all interpretations of the data, were open to challenge. Furthermore it was clear that ideas were being revised as the class proceeded.

As a result tutor and students were encouraged to develop a critical attitude to knowledge, and to contest knowledge in a disciplined way. They were all stimulated by the need to keep thinking, and by the need to provide arguments to support views expressed. This is not to say that everyone contributed equally to the class discussion, they did not. But all were stimulated to hear and reflect, which are important elements of critical thought.

In the light of the earlier discussion, this was an excellent higher education class. It provided teaching and learning which stimulated the development of critical thinking. A key factor in that was the presence in the class of active researchers (the tutor and the obsessive student) who were able to interact and thus to stimulate the rest of the group. In both cases, the research was of the exploring kind, offering the possibility of re-assessment of existing knowledge and the creation of new knowledge. The two researchers were able to recognise this active research interest in each other and to acknowledge each other's expertise. They were also able to agree to differ on occasions.

Research, teaching and learning

As I remarked earlier, two classes is a very small sample from which to generalise. However, I do think both these classes are typical. The groupies with their guru are a familiar part of the adult education scene, albeit less common than in the past due to the pressures of accreditation. The class with the obsessive student is also familiar. Many of us who teach in adult education have come across such students, and not all of us have found the experience as positive as the one I have described. Nevertheless we have been able to learn much from our obsessive students.

If these classes are typical, what can we learn from them? The difference between these two classes is clear: as far as the development of critical thinking is concerned, one offers a good educational experience, the other does not. I suggest that an important part of the difference in educational experience is the presence in the class of active student research.

In the Reformation history class, there was research, but it was all the tutor's research. None of the students attempted to do research, though many of them read the books recommended. They did not just accept the tutor's word for everything, there was some discussion, but the discussion lacked a critical edge, because it was accepted, albeit tacitly, that the tutor knew and the students did not. So in this class there was little stimulus for students or tutor to challenge accepted views or raise critical questions.

In the local history class there was research by the tutor and by at least one student. Consequently the tutor was forced to face challenges and as the tutor faced challenges, so did the class. It was clear that knowledge was contestable, that evidence had to be weighed, that there was more than one interpretation of the information available - and that not all the information had been available to the tutor. Ideas were revised during the course. Of course a good tutor is open to challenge at any time, and will encourage the students to consider alternative points of view, and will ensure that alternatives are properly discussed. But in this case the tutor did not need to provoke challenge nor even act as devil's advocate: the contesting of knowledge, the critical questioning of accepted ideas, arose naturally because someone else in the class was in a position to raise critical questions.

To summarise, in one class the teaching and learning were set in the context of active critical engagement, in the other case they were not.

I suggest we can say more. The second class worked educationally not just because someone in the class other than the tutor had expert knowledge, but also because the tutor was able to make effective use of the expertise available. This entailed both recognising the expert knowledge offered, and being able to see where it fitted into the general scheme of the class. Otherwise there is the danger which

many tutors in adult education have faced, of the obsessive student taking over, and the class losing its thread and momentum.

To note the importance of the tutor's use of the student's expertise is not simply to recognise the fact, often ignored, that the success or otherwise of a class depends a great deal on the relational skills of the tutor and students. Rather, I suggest, it points to the need for the tutor to be active in research; for without the confidence in critical scrutiny of data which grows with research the tutor might well become defensive and resist the critical enquiry of the student. Of course, no good tutor would do such a thing, but ....!

Conclusion

I draw two conclusions from all this.

First, educational experience in higher education is enhanced by the presence of active researchers in the class. That is, teaching and learning in higher education is more effective if supported by the enquiring context of research and the challenges to existing interpretations which come naturally from research of the exploratory kind.

Second, the experience of adult education is that the stimulus of research may come as well from student research as from tutor research, but the tutor must be sufficiently able and active as a researcher to recognise and use constructively student research.

This latter point suggests to me that teachers in adult education need to engage in discipline research, rather than in research in education. For only then will they have the critical confidence to recognise and use creatively the research offered by their students.

I suggest that if the assumption on which this paper is based is correct, that the development of critical thinking is one of the chief purposes of higher education, the classes I have discussed offer important lessons for teaching and learning in higher education. For they suggest that teaching and learning in higher education is made more effective when set in the context of active research. The classes also pose a significant challenge to teachers in higher education: to what extent are we ready to accept the research activity of our students as a valid contribution to the educational experience. In adult education we often boast that we do this. The class in Reformation history makes me wonder: if a student in that class did offer some research, what would the reaction be, of tutor and other students? Even in adult education we sometimes prefer the groupies to the obsessives: and even in adult education, we sometimes fail to offer a good educational experience.

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Combining Teaching, Learning and Research.

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> "I never really understood just what was going on at work until I got involved in this course. Now I look at my job through different eyes, and I am not particularly happy at what see." Student and Shop Steward.

There is, within the general literature available on teaching and learning in higher education, a large portion dedicated to the discovery of a relationship between research and teaching. The most widely held view is that while a relationship does exist, the precise nature of that relationship remains problematic. The range of opinions surrounding this debate are, perhaps, best articulated by Ramsden and Moses (1992). They offer three contrasting views: the strong intergrationist view that links active research with good teaching; the intergrationist view that believes links between research and teaching do exist, but not at the level of the individual academic; and the independence view which states that no relationship exists at all. In their attempts to unravel this relationship, Brew and Boud argue that '... it is not teaching and research that are directly (if weakly) related, but that each is related to something else'. They believe the 'something else' to be learning, that in fact the 'processes of research are similar to those that students go through and.... in teaching you are therefore a learner helping others to learn' (1995 pp.35). This paper represents a personal reflection of the experience of a teacher of a group of adult students involved in a unit on a part-time Higher Education Certificate in Trade Union and Labour Studies. Those reflections suggest that a relationship between research and teaching does exist, and the conclusions of Brew and Boud are indeed correct; that research can and does assist the process of learning. Moreover, they also suggest that, given the correct circumstances, teaching can inform research. The teacher can, in fact, learn both with, and from, the students.

The students concerned (3 women and 8 men, though gender was not a factor) were all actively involved in the trade union movement and should be considered industrial relations practitioners. The unit, entitled 'Control at Work', was developed to provide the student with an understanding of the complexities of the employment relationship, and of the mechanisms of control that are available to employers, as they seek to regulate that relationship. In the early weeks of the unit it became apparent that the academic material being covered was registering positively with the students, dealing as it was with some of the more problematic issues experienced by them, in their individual workplaces. As active industrial relations practitioners, the students were at the forefront of the fight to establish the 'frontier of control' (Friedman 1978) that defines the 'contested terrain' that is the workplace (Edwards 1979). As such, they engaged with the unit in ways that confirmed problems identified by Schon (1986) in that gaps exist between: the scientific knowledge generated by academic research and the relevance of that research to practitioners; and between the institutional conception of what constitutes professional knowledge, and the competencies required by the practitioners.

While the students on this course would never be classed as professionals within a narrow definition of that term, as experienced practitioners they should be identified as such. This was a misconception that I was also guilty of making. In my delivery of the academic material required by the syllabus, explaining bureaucratic, technical and cultural forms of control etc., I was failing to provide that material in a way that was useful to the students in helping them understand their lived experiences at work. As a consequence, I was failing to meet their requirements as practitioners (if not professionals). The unit, in providing a theoretical framework through which they could identify, and better understand, the mechanisms of control they were experiencing in their individual employment relationships, was also causal in identifying what it was failing to provide; namely, a framework within which they could develop strategies of resistance to those mechanisms of control.

The realisation that I was failing to meet the needs of this group of students brought with it the need for a re-assessment, not only of the method of delivery of the unit, but also of my own role as the unit tutor. This process of re-assessment brought me to Williamson's paper, based on case studies of similar students on a similar course. He concludes that:

> It follows from these observations that those who seek to provide greater educational opportunities for adults must seek to do so in ways which build upon an understanding, not only of the personal interests of different people, but of how they make sense of change, in their own lives and in the society in which they live. (1992 pp.176)

Following this advice, and in an attempt to maximise the learning process for all concerned, I organised the students into a focus group, and changed emphasis in the delivery of the academic material. As previously stated, emphasis had centred on an attempt to define and understand, through a study of the academic literature, the mechanisms of control available and used in the workplace. Following this re-organisation, emphasis was firstly placed on identifying and understanding the influences and constraints those mechanisms of control imposed on the working lives of the students. Once identified, those influences and constraints were then examined and tested against the academic literature. This was instrumental in assisting them in their attempts to develop and articulate strategies of resistance. In essence, my aims were now to get the students to reflect on their own experiences of control in the workplace, and to set those experiences against the perceived understanding of the employment relationship enshrined in the academic literature.

Through sharing their experiences, the students were able, in a much clearer way, to articulate their understanding of the organisational mechanisms of control, economic, social and cultural, that determined and shaped those same experiences. They were increasingly able to understand the apparatus' that perpetuated the hierarchical systems that represented, for them, control and domination of their working lives. Through this understanding they were able relocate their resistance in ways that were pro-active, rather than re-active. This relocation was achieved, in part, through the unit assessment.

Previously, assessment of the unit had involved the typical 2,000-word essay; chosen from a range of titles. This was changed to an assessment involving a work based research project. Students were required to identify the mechanisms of control encountered in their own daily working lives, and to explore the reasons why their employers had chosen to implement those particular ones. While this was still to be an individual assessment, the students were encouraged to collaborate. This was done for two reasons: firstly, out of a belief that the students themselves represented a valuable learning resource in, and for, themselves; and secondly, that collaborative study would enhance the educational process that has commonly become known as 'action learning' (Pedler, 1983: Revans, 1980). Usually associated with post-graduate and 'professional' education, it was therefore applicable to this particular group of students. Gregory (1995) describes a system of 'action learning' developed specifically for students on a Master of Arts degree in Human Resource Strategy, which sought through work based research to 'provide human resource professionals with the capability and confidence to influence strategic decision making', presumably to control the organisations human resources. I felt that if 'action learning' would enhance the learning process for students aspiring to develop strategies of control, then the same should apply to students aspiring to counteract those strategies.

The learning process throughout the remainder of the unit could be described as a process of 'experiential learning', which is usually associated with the Kolb Learning Cycle (Kolb and Fry 1975), though like other examples differ from Kolb's original model. These students entered the 'cycle' with a reflective observation of the mechanisms of control they were experiencing in the workplace; they then generalised these reflections against historical, and contemporary, research into the subject, out of which came strategies of resistance; which they tested against their own concrete experiences in the workplace. The students developed the ability to reflect, in an informed way, on their own practice in dealing with the everyday life experiences of a shop floor worker. In doing so,

they became critically literate of those experiences, and had developed what Jarvinen (1989) describes as the ability to 'learn to learn'.

By using a focus group as the medium of delivery, the distinction between teaching and learning became blurred, almost to the point of non-existence. Each group member, including the tutor, was at the same time teacher and learner. My role had been transformed from one of teacher, to that of facilitator, and to providing the theoretical framework within which the subsequent discussions took place. Those discussions were directed by the implicit knowledge emanating from the personal experiences of the students, what Salmon (1989) describes as 'knowledge in our bones, understanding to be lived by'. That implicit knowledge, brought from the factory floor to the classroom, to be tested against the academic theories, allowed a significantly deeper understanding than had been previously available. The students were able to concentrate on issues more specific to their own requirements, and through the process of 'action learning' generated by the work based projects, were able to gain a better understanding of the academic requirements of the unit than would have been through the normal delivery method. By 'living the experience' of being controlled at work, the product of the research projects undertaken by the students, provided a wealth of valuable information, far more detailed and insightful than could be expected from research undertaken by outsiders, who are allowed only a glimpse into the normally hidden world of work.

These insights, and the enthusiasm of the students to be involved in further research, provided the impetus for the development of a more detailed research project. The students themselves were central in this development. They were instrumental in gaining access to their own organisations and to the relevant individuals within them; in determining the focus of the research; and in contributing significantly to the methodology. The organisations the students were able to negotiate access into included: a car component factory; a heavy engineering plant; a light engineering factory; an armaments factory; and a national brewing organisation. The research project was undertaken, by a colleague, and myself, with the students acting as advisors, and in the interpretation of the subsequent findings. The results of this research will be presented to the Work, Employment and Society Annual Conference at the University of Cambridge in September of this year, as a paper entitled 'Total Quality Management: An Informed View form the shop Floor'.

Conclusion

What can we take from this case study? Looking at it within the context of this conference, I think that we can say, with confidence, that there is an osmotic relationship between research and teaching. Reflecting on the experiences outlined above, I take the strong intergrationist view offered by Ramsden and Moses (1992), being convinced that active research informs and creates good teaching. As a researcher myself, not only in the field of industrial sociology, but also in adult education, I can see within my own performance as a teacher, especially in the context of the case study unit, the benefits that come from both areas of research. The successful re-organisation of the unit, and this paper itself is, I believe, ample proof of that. I also believe that this evidence supports the views of Brew and Boud (1995), who argue that research is more importantly linked to learning. Within the learning process outlined above, the relationship between the research, both industrial and educational, and the learning process of the students and the teacher, can and should be seen as symbiotic.

In a broader context, I think the findings represent a reaffirmation of some important points that have been expressed elsewhere.

- It is easier to learn, if what is learned somehow connects with the learners own experience. Re-organising the unit in a way that required the students use their lived experiences at work as a focus for their learning, enabled them to gain more form the unit than if it had been delivered in the traditional way. This point will become more important as the drive to expand access leads to an increasingly diverse student population.
- That education is a vehicle of personal empowerment and through it, social change. Through their involvement in education these students, coming together from the shared background of the

'shop floor', came to see that the hierarchies of domination and control they encountered in the work place were social constructions that could, and should be confronted.

The case study also identified certain issues that require further discussion and examination. The most important of which is:

- Using student experience as suitable material in the learning process has been at the centre of adult education for a long time, but what happens when those student experiences go beyond academic understanding? It became apparent at an early stage in the case study unit that a gap existed between the level of knowledge implicitly understood by these experienced practitioners, and that available from within the broader academic community. As an active researcher, I was able to gain a much clearer picture of the complexities of the employment relationship from the students than I have gained from the more usual methods of social research.

Other points we may wish to consider:

- How relevant are grand academic theories in assisting students to understand, and come to terms with, their own realities?
- How best can teachers fulfil the requirements of students, who are also experienced practitioners, and whose expertise may go beyond that of their own?

This paper was not conceived as an attempt to develop prescriptive suggestions for those involved in adult education. It represents a personal refection of what was a greatly rewarding educational experience for all of those involved. It is an example of several things: what is possible if adults are allowed an input into their own education; of how teaching and research can, in certain circumstances, be a symbiotic as well as osmotic relationship; and finally, an example of the enrichment that can come from involvement with adult students.

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Research, Teaching and Learning: making connections in the education of adults

Papers from the 28th Annual SCUTREA Conference

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